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ABSTRACT

This report reviews activities carried out from 1980 to 1982 under Project Education and Community Development, a home intervention program designed to enhance the social and educational environment of minority group families in Ofakim, Israel. After a brief introduction (Part I), the accomplishments of each component program are considered separately for 1980-81 (Part II) and 1981-82 (Part III). Programs discussed include the EMRA Home-Intervention Programme, the Neighborhood Family Centers, the Parent Education Programme and play corners in pediatric clinic waiting rooms, the Tutorial Programme, the Early Childhood Resource Centre, the Programme/Center for Teenage Girls, the Early Childhood Resource Center, and a staff training component. Also considered are the project's efforts to disseminate the concepts and activities implemented under Project Education and Community Development through satellite programs in neighboring communities. Part IV reviews the project's success in meeting its aims and objectives during Phase II, which dealt primarily with the consolidation, expansion, and institutionalization within the community of Project philosophy and activities. (GC)

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PROJECT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

OFAKIM ISRAEL

PROGRESS REPORT NO. 5
SUMMARY OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES
PHASE II - 1980 - 1982

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SUMMARY OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES
PHASE II - 1980 - 1982

Prepared by:
Ruth Paz
Project Director

December 1982.

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I INTRODUCTION

In the Summary Report on Stage I: September 1977 - August 1980 of Project Education and Community Development in Ofakim, we traced the growth and development of the project in some detail throughout its initial, pioneering phase and evaluated its successes and its failures. The latter (given the broad-ranging and rather ambitious aims of the project, its libertarian basis, and its extra-establishment base of operations) were almost inevitable - yet they provided us with a valuable, if sometimes painful, learning experience and helped us to align the desirable with the possible in terms of the community, its needs and its perceptions, and our responses. On the other hand, we were rewarded by a fair degree of success in laying the groundwork for the establishment of a comprehensive and integrated programme of community- based, child-centred educational activities emphasizing the active participation of parents in various activities relating to the education of their young children. Neighbourhood family guidance centres were established, and together with community facilities such as clinics and schools served as bases for parent education and enrichment activities directed towards infants, toddlers and pre-school children; local women were trained as para-professional educational counsellors and staffed all of these programmes under the direction of the project's professional staff. Considerable progress was made towards demonstrating the basic premises of the project:

a. that the child's innate potential can best be realized through the integration of all the elements of his world - family, school, peer-group and community - into an interactive whole, an educational ecology;
b. that effective community development and viable community life are best served by the active involvement of community members and by their self-functioning;
c. that a comprehensive, integrated programme combining education and community development, encompassing members of the community and relevant to its needs can serve as a vehicle for overall social change in depressed communities, off-setting the dependence and low self-image which are characteristic of these communities and which offer a negative environment for the development of children.

Progress was made in the direction of decreasing the community's dependence on outside assistance and improving the ability of its members to solve their problems by relying on their own resources. Central to these developments was the intervention strategy informing all project initiatives: participative and supportive rather than directive, involving representatives of the community as active partners in all phases of project development and implementation. The training of local women to staff project activities became in itself an objective as well as a means to an end, insofar as these local workers served as role-models for the community-at-large.

The main thrust of project activities was in the direction of the prevention of deprivation rather than compensation for its deleterious effects. This meant in effect reaching the child via the parent and assuring that the home - the child's first "school" - provided better conditions for his overall development. In order to reach thos families most in need of, yet usually outside the influence of educational and community interventions, the neighborhood community was chosen as the potentially most effective base for programme operations. Similarly, work was begun on an early childhood core-curriculum which could be adapted and applied to a variety of settings: individual home visits and counselling, group work with young parents and children, thus forming the basis of a comprehensive programme of parent education and guidance.

In September, we submitted a grant proposal for an additional and final three-year period of project activities to the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. During this second stage of the project we planned to consolidate, intensify and refine the various programmes which had been initiated and continue the process of developing structures and activities translating our approach to community and education into educational practice, with the intent of defining a comprehensive model for community-based education and development, integrating the various community-education programmes into an inter-locking whole, with programmes

re-inforcing each other at the horizontal level (i.e. early-childhood programmes in the clinics, at the neighbourhood centres, in the home and feeding into each other vertically parent involvement in the home, in the kindergarten, in the school) so as to create both a network and a continuum of community and parent involvement in education.

The main goal which we set ourselves for Phase II was institutionalization of project activities, in the belief that the acceptance of innovative programmes by the community as integral components of community life was a pre-condition determining the ultimate viability and continuity of project activities. Growing community involvement in planning and implementation, both at the staff and the participatory levels, as well as the assumption of increased responsibility by statutory authorities for project operations, resulting from the establishment of a joint administrative framework, would, it was hoped, ultimately lead to community responsibility and control of the project.

The Phase II project proposal also set forth our intentions to disseminate our experience beyond the confines of Ofakim, in the form of a satellite programme in the neighbouring moshav (small-holders cooperative village) communities, where we planned to adapt community-educational programmes developed in Ofakim to a demographically similar yet structurally very different rural setting. It was our belief that careful monitoring, evaluation and comparison of results achieve in these different settings would contribute considerable towards the development of models suitable for dissemination to other social settings, and towards the development of appropriate conceptual formulations generalized from the cumulative experience of integrated and comprehensive community education project.

In order to assure systematic evaluation of project operations, it was proposed that a team from the Hubert Humphrey Centre for Social Ecology at the Ben Gurion University of the Negevundertake responsibility for project evaluation. The first report of this team, evaluating project activities during the first half-year of Phase II (January-June 1981) accompanies this report under separate cover, and will shortly be followed by an evaluation report dealing with the period from September 1981 - July 1982.

Towards the end of 1980, the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation approved the grant proposal which had been submitted for a second phase of project activities, to begin in January 1981.

The present report continues from the point where the Summary Report on Phase I left off :September 1980. Our frame of reference is the operational project year, (September - July) rather than the calendar year.

Although the first part of 1980 was still technically part of Phase I, we found it expedient to include this period in the present report; despite the fact that Phase II activities officially began only in January 1981, project activities for the operational year beginning in September 1981 were planned with Phase II and its objectives in mind.

II Project Developments 1980-1981

A. Project Objectives

In transposing the overall project aims for Phase II, described in the introduction, into operational terms, we defined project objectives and the operational plans for their implementation in terms of three dimensions:

1. The functional/operational dimension. Here our main thrust was to be towards the consolidation and further expansion of those programmes which had proven to be most relevant to community needs and interests and hence most viable, and on their integration into a community-education network, as well as towards the development of a limited number of new initiatives designed to meet the needs of potential problem groups in the community - children from multi-problem families at the beginning of their school career and girls in their teens who had dropped out of school or were likely candidates to do so.

2. The structural/organizational dimension. Our central objective in this area was the enhancement of autonomous community functioning as expressed in the increasing assumption of responsibility by community members at various levels - the local staff of the project, representatives of community institutions, and project participants-for all aspects of project operations at both the planning and operational levels. A corollary to the assumption of community responsibility for project operations was the institutionalization of project programmes so as to insure their continued existance and functioning as part of the on-going regular life of the community. This in turn called for exploring cost-effective ways of implementing the programmes developed by the project, so as to assure their future viability in times of economic constraints.

3. The conceptual/content dimension. Our aim here was to develop a well-defined "curriculum" for all the project programmes, informed by the same integrative, holistic philosophy guiding project activities at the operational and organizational level.

Whether in the early childhood core curriculum, the activity programme at the neighbourhood centres or the content of the various study and activity groups for adults and children, emphasis was placed on all aspects of human growth and development - emotional, social, moral as well as cognitive and on the development of the individual's innate strengths and resources. The existance of autonomous, well-integrated communities is predicated by the existance of autonomous well-integrated individuals in their midst.

B. Project Operations

1. The EMRA Home Intervention Programme

EMRA is a community-based home intervention programme for parents of infants and toddlers (0-3) aimed especially at housewives living in relative social isolation and lacking awareness of the need to provide their children with a stimulating and enriching environment. The programme stresses the role of the mother as the child's first teacher (EMRA is an acronym of the Hebrew words for "mother" and "teacher") and encourages her to adapt her priorities and behaviour to fit that role. The programme, which combines weekly home-visits by a para-professional counsellor with periodic group meetins at the neighbourhood family centres, guides parents towards more effective modes of parenting and family life and encourages them to participate in the life of the community. Parents are helped to recognize and exploit educational opportunities present in the environment and in every-day stiuations and to provide their children with adequate stimulation through utilization of resources available in the home, simple (often home-made) toys and games, songs, stories, etc. Be stressing involvement in group activities with other parents and children at the neighbourhood centre, the programme avoids undue dependency on the professional and para-professional staff of the project and sets in motion a process of active participation in community and neighbourhood affairs.

The basic structure of the programme had been developed during Phase I of the project. During 1979-1980, 6 para-professional counsellors worked with 52 families (8-9 families per counsellor), under the supervision of two professionals - Tova Malin, whose experience in Head Start in the U.S. was very useful, and Shoshana Sfarzada, a local girl with university training in educational counselling, responsible for liason with the families. A "curriculum" had been developed for 3 age groups of children: 0-9 months, 9-15 months, and 15-36 months, with a flexible monthly activity plan for each group. A simple rating scale had been introduced to assess and monitor the child's developmental level and progress (adapted from the South-Eastern Day-Care Project of H.E.W.), and served as the basis for the individual home visits which were planned by the counsellors in consultation with the project supervisor. Most of the families in the programme came from the two neighbourhoods in which the project was based: Eli Cohen and Ben Gurion, and were recruited through the "Well-Baby" clinics.

While activities at the beginning of the 1980-1981 school year followed the above pattern, the beginning of Phase II in January was accompanied by a concerted and systematic effort to implement the objectives of the project out-lined earlier on. In terms of the EMRA programme, this meant expansion of the programme -geographically, to new neighbourhoods and in the number of families involved; developing the organizational structure and the programme contents along lines permitting the para-professional team to function more independently; concentrating on those aspects of staff-training which would enhence the counsellors skills and abilities to assume increasing responsibility for all aspects of the programme, and trying to make the programme more cost-effective.

During 1980-1981, 7 para-professional counsellors (4 of them new graduates of the project's yearly training course) worked with 10 families each. The professional team supervising the programme underwent some changes, with Beri Yahav, an early childhood education expert, replacing Tova Malin, who left the project and with Shoshana Sfarzada sharing in the educational supervision as well as continuing liason work with the families. Of the 80 families participating in the programme (17 of them for their second year) 62 completed the year. Those who dropped out did so primarily as a result of the mother going out to work, or because the family moved. A new phenomenon was the fact that we were increasingly approached by mothers who wanted to join the programme, which had become popularized in the community. On the whole, the families in the programme were better educated, smaller and younger than the ones with whom we worked in prior years, bearing out our contention that the large, semi-literate families once considered arch-typical of the development towns were coming to the end of their child-bearing cycle.

The average family in the programme in 1980-1981
was born in North Africa;
had three children;
had 8-11 years schooling;
the father was a manual worker or craftsman;
the mother a housewife;
the father was aged 29;
the mother was aged 26.

More than half of the families in the programme come from the Ramet neighbourhood, a new location for project activities. Though populated largely by young families, this neighbourhood is a reservoir of a variety of social problems, ranging from housing density, severely disturbed inter-familial relations and general cultural and educational impoverishment.

This 'culture of poverty' finds expression in the neglected and run-down appearance of the relatively new neighbourhood, and in the less obvious and less tangible cultural and educational deprivation in which the children are growing up. Many of these young mothers, often married while yet in their teens and quickly finding themselves burdened by two or more children, tended to view their offspring as 'jailers' who kept them tied to the home 24 hours a day, and vented their frustrations on the children.

As in prior years, initial contact with families in the programme was established by the programme's supervisors.

The sequence and structure of the home-visits were defined more clearly and institutionalized. On the first home-visit, the day and time of future visits was set, and a "contract" signed, which also obligated the mother to pay a small fee for participation in the programme. We introduced the use of an initial acquaintance form, which included direct questions to the mother and was intended to give her a feeling of participation and involvement from the first visit. Through these questions the counsellor was able to draw the mother into broader discussion concerning her child and her child-rearing practices, and thus acquired a general picture of the home environment.

The second visit was based on an age-appropriate gift for the child, made by the counsellor: for infants, a soft ball with a jingle-bell inside; for children in their second year, a hand-puppet; for children in their third year, a flannel board. While the child explored its present, the counsellor and the mother talked about how it was made, different ways in which it could be used and which specific aspects of the child's development it promoted.

The third home-visit was devoted to evaluation of the child's level of functioning so as to establish a base-line measure and guide-lines for the structure of an individual programme for each child, providing activities to further his overall development, with stress on those areas of weakness revealed by the evaluation forms. In the past, we had used a simple rating scale developed in the U.S. by the South-East Day Care Project of H.E.W. for this purpose. However, we had come to the conclusion that this scale was not sufficiently sensitive for our needs, and after consultation with experts in the field, decided to introduce the Denver Development Screening Test. Five in-service training sessions were devoted to teaching the para-professional counsellors to use the test, and we were helped in this effort by a clinical child psychologist.

Use of the Denver permitted us to acquire a more accurate profile of the child's developmental level; on occasion, it revealed severe developmental lags, in which case we referred the family for professional help. Throughout the year, we continued to use the Denver to monitor the child's progress.

In order to monitor and evaluate the effect of participation in the programme on the mother and her parental functioning, we adopted the Educational Needs Assessment Inventory of Parent Behaviour developed by the DARCEE Training Programme for Home Intervention at Peabody College. This inventory provided us with periodic information on the families and their progress, and indirectly helped the counsellors to assess their own performance as role-models, as well as identifying weak areas in the mother's functioning. Both of these evaluation instruments are discussed in detail in the accompanying Evaluation Report for January-June 1981.

Though they too suffered from shortcomings, they contributed greatly towards making our intervention more effective and better aligned to the needs and problems of child and parent.

In January 1981, we began planning the content of home-visits according to the outline of the Early Childhood Core curriculum which we had begun to develop, following the lines set out by Burton White (1975 The First Years of Life).

The curriculum was based on 7 developmental stages in the age range from 0 to 3:

I birth to 6 weeks
II 6 weeks to 3½ months
III 3½ to 5½ months
IV 5½ to 8 months
V 8 to 14 months
VI 14 to 24 months
VII 2 years to 3 years.

The curriculum stressed the fact that children learn through play, and that parents can help their children develop through play. Play ideas were grouped under 21 main headings, according to the kind of activity (or materials) focused on; activities under each heading were arranged in sequence according to the stage of development when they first became applicable. We planned eventually to develop a card-file of activities, colour-coded according to stages. However, in the meantime, the outline served effectively as a framework for planning home-visits geared to the specific developmental needs of each child. The curriculum focused attention on the whole child and his development - affective, social and moral no less than cognitive and sensory - motor, with the development of language stressed throughout in all activities.

No less it stressed the role of the parent in providing appropriate play (learning) opportunities for the child, and in providing the necessary support, encouragement and guidance.

A number of in-service- training sessions were devoted to teaching the para-professional counsellors how to use the curriculum outline: how to chose an activity suitable to the child's development and special needs; how to present an activity - to both the child and the mother; and how to plan activities and home-visits independently. The resources (games, toys, books, work, materials) needed for implementation of the curriculum were organized and catalogued, so that they were readily available to the counsellors, thus cutting down time spent on preparations.

It now became possible to focus most of our attention in the time available for individual supervision and in-service training to upgrading the para-professional counsellors' skills. The team devoted a number of sessions to defining the qualities needed for successful counselling (incidentally, their list matched the one drawn up by the professional staff almost item by item). Further sessions dealt with topics such as:

-- planning and running group meetings
-- the counsellor in the family: involvement or interference
-- inter-personal communication
-- professional ethics
-- improving reporting and recording procedures
-- evaluation and self-evaluation procedures.

During the second half of the year, we introduced instruments for evaluation of counsellors' performance by the supervisors, and self-evaluation by the counsellors. These are discussed in detail in the evaluation report covering this period.

The one area in which little progress was made was in the organization of group meetings of mothers. Half of the mothers in the programme came from the Remet neighbourhood, where we were negotiating for facilities for a new neighbourhood centre, but where in the meantime no appropriate meeting place was available. As a result, group meetings in the other neighbourhoods were also minimal. In summarizing the year's activity, we viewed this as the main challenge to be met in the coming year - since we considered these group meetings of major importance in furthering group cohesion and deepening the involvement of the mothers in the community.

In summary, significant progress was made during the 1980-1981 activity year towards institutionalizing the programme and reducing the dependence of the indigenous para-professional staff on professional supervision. By increasing the case-load of each counsellor to 10 families, the programme was made more cost effective. No less important, we were able to answer a real need by extending the programme to a new neighbourhood populated by many young parents and children.

2. The Neighbourhood Family Centres

From the beginning of the project, we viewed the establishment of community centres at the local level, serving as meeting-places and physical base of operations, as a pre-condition for the successful development of neighbourhood-based project activities - and as the crucial link in realizing the central aims of the project - the creation of an educational ecology for the child, and a framework in which people could participate actively in their own and their children's education and acquire experience transferable to other areas of community life.

With the help of AMIGUR, the Jewish Agency housing authority responsible for upkeep and improvement of the rental housing in Ofakim, the project's first neighbourhood family centre was opened in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood in December 1979, in two ground-floor flats whose connecting walls had been removed and which had been otherwise adapted to this purpose. The centre quickly became the hub of a broad range of activities reaching out from the centre into the neighbourhood, aimed at answering a variety of needs. Some 120 families - parents and children - came into contact with the centre and utilized its facilities with varying degrees of regularity.

In June 1980, a second neighbourhood family centre serving the population of the Ben Gurion neighbourhood was opened in an unused kindergarten put at the project's disposal by the municipality. The neighbourhood family centres were intended to be multi-functional with space, time and resources adaptable to the needs of the community and the project. No less than serving as a hub for community-based educational activities, the centres were viewed as central to the integration of the various facets of project activity: group meetings of mothers in the EMRA programme, staff training, workshops for early childhood educators, etc.

The central aim informing all activities at the centres was viewed as the fostering of self-functioning and autonomy - both at the level of the individual, child or adult, and at that of the community. We set the following objectives for centre-based activities:

1. providing parents with guidance and helping them to enhance their knowledge and skills so as to enable them to function more effectively as parents and teachers, by means of discussion and activity groups and active involvement in the running of centre activities;
2. providing stimulation and enrichment for infants, toddlers and pre-school children by means of a variety of structured and unstructured play and creative activities;
3. encouraging neighbourhood women to work together to improve the quality of family and neighbourhood life by meeting together to discuss common problems and search for effective solutions;
4. serving as social centre for neighbourhood women and reducing the social and psychological isolation common to many housewives and young mothers.

In the 1980-1981 activity year, each of the centres were staffed by a team of para-professionals: a full time "house-mother" also responsible for community out-reach work, and two part-time counsellors, who together with the "house-mother" supervised afternoon activities for children. This team was supervised and guided by Aviva Kribus, a kibbutz member trained in special education at the Kibbutz Teachers' Seminar at Oranim. The various workshops and discussion groups for mothers were run by various professionals and para-professionals from the project staff or specially recruited for that purpose. The centres operated 5 days a week (Sunday through Wednesday, both mornings and afternoons; on Thursdays, mornings were reserved for in-service training, while children's afternoon activities continued as usual).

In the mornings, the focus was on activities with mothers, who came to the centres with their infants and toddlers; in the afternoons, the centres were given over to activities for children.

Whereas in 1979-1980 our main concern had been with simply getting the centres organized and functioning and attracting the community to their activities, we now turned over attention to the development of a structured, though flexible, programme which would facilitate the project's aims: the creation of community centres serving as focii of community-education activities in which neighbourhood residents, adults and children, would be actively involved.

Since the para-professional counsellors staffing the centres would have to be the ones directly involved in running this programme, (albeit with professional help and supervision), staff training, both in the form of individual supervision and group in-service training sessions was given top priority - as was the attempt to organize parents' committees to help plan and run activities.

Systematic recording procedures where introduced: attendance and participation were recorded daily, and the counsellors kept a log of each day's activities. The daily records were in turn summarized in weekly reports, which served as a basis for discussion in staff meetings. A file of neighbourhood residents was maintained in each centre, enabling us to cross- reference the attendance records and identify families with children in the neighbourhood not yet in contact with the centre; these in turn became targets for out-reach work. The house-mothers in each centre were charged with visiting these families in their homes, explaining the centre, its purpose and its activities, inviting people to join.

The afternoon activity programme for children

Each afternoon, the centres were opened to the neighbourhood children, up to age 8. From age 3, the child could come to the centre unattended by a parent, though parents were encouraged to come and participate.

In developing the programme we were guided by the educational philosophy and approach central to the models developed at the Oranim Study Centre for Children's Activities, which encouraged self-initiated activity on the part of the child, independent problem solving, cooperation and mutual aid, independance and responsibility. This approach was very much in line with the project's overall aim of fostering self-functioning and autonomy in the individual and the community. For the counsellors, it meant a drastic change in their perceptions of their role, in which they had tended to be too directive, and the bulk of in-service training sessions were devoted to training them in this "new" approach. We made use of Oranim training materials - video tapes, slides and written materials for this purpose; in January the centre staff spent 3 days in Oranim and Migdal Haemek observing this approach in practice, and Zipporah Nir came to Ofakim to conduct a workshop in situ. Use was also made of our own video equipment for training purposes; the counsellors were able to view themselves in interaction with the children, and analyze their own shortcomings. Training sessions were also devoted to problems of 'special' children - retarded, hyperkinetic, etc. who were able to find their place and feel wanted at the centres.

The centres provided a wide range of play and enrichment activities, and children were encouraged to move freely from one activity of their choice to another. Activity areas included building blocks and vehicles, a make-believe play area, sand and water, carpenting, creative play (painting, collage, clay, paste, etc.); a reading corner; a listening corner equipped with tape and ear-phones; games, puzzles, and creative toys; puppets, etc.

A short period at the end of each play session was given over to organized group activities: group games, pantomime, songs and rhymes, story-telling, and impromptu theatrical performances. After several months, the programme had developed along clearly defined lines, and the counsellors had become firm adherents of this different educational approach. (It should be pointed out that kindergartens in Ofakim tend to function as scaled-down classrooms, with a structured and very much teacher-directed curriculum. The centres, on the other hand, were child-centred, non-directive, and not achievement-orientated). The mixed age group in the centres - ranging from toddlers to 1st and 2nd graders - posed no problem: children gravitated naturally toward those activities of interest to them, and older children often played with and helped younger ones.

Since so far, we had had but limited success in involving parents in the children's activities, we decided to develop a special programme of structured enrichment activities in which parents and children would jointly participate, and in which parents would indirectly learn how to play with their children. Two types of activities were planned: didactic games (both bought and home-made) and creative story-telling, using a variety of techniques - magic lantern, puppets, pantomime, flannel and magnetic boards, etc. - with parent and child actively involved. This programme began functioning in both centres in the second half of the year, on Tuesday afternoons (when shops and offices are closed) - after a long period of preparation. On the afternoon of the "MASLUL" programme, only children attended by parents were admitted to the centre - and the children made a point of encouraging their parents to attend. The programme was on the whole successful, especially in the Eli Cohen centre, where the same group of mothers attended regularly. For many of these mothers, this proved to be their first experience of play, as an activity in which adults legitimately take part.

The morning activity programme for mothers

The morning activities at the centres were aimed primarily at the young mothers of infants and toddlers in the neighbourhoods, who did not work outside the home. At one level, we viewed these activities as a social outlet for the women, and as a means towards fostering social cohesion in the neighbourhood community. At another level, each of the group activities involved acquisition of skills and knowledge in those areas central to their lives - child-rearing, family-life and home-making. We hoped that participation in the various workshops and discussion circles would increase the women's self-confidence, improve their self-image, and help them to cope more effectively with the problems of daily life, as well as leading to their more active involvement in the community.

The major and most successful activity was the weekly course for mothers of infants and toddlers, "You and Your Child". 13 mothers in the Eli Cohen Centre and 10 in the Ben Gurion Centre met weekly over an eight month period; all the women who had signed up for the course continued until the end, with almost no absences. The course dealt with various aspects of child development and education. A high degree of group cohesion was reached, and in each of the centres, these women became the central group, from whose ranks the mothers' committees were organized, and who were responsible for the organization of holiday celebrations at the centres, the used-clothing exchange at the Eli Cohen centre, etc. At the end of the year, each woman received a certificate. (Some of these mothers later went on to become counsellors in the programme). The course was conducted by an experienced teacher-trainer from Beersheva, with the house-mothers assisting. Good use was made by these mothers of the lending-library at the centre, and it became customary to exchange books at the end of each session.

For most of these women this was their first contact with literature on child-rearing and related topics.

An attempt was made to organize a similar group in the evenings for working mothers, but this proved to be unsuccessful. Several other activity groups were organized in each of the centres throughout the year, usually of three months duration. A minimal fee was paid by the women participating in each group, who also paid the cost of all materials used. At the Eli Cohen Centre, some 6 mothers participated in a games workshop which ran for 10 sessions. The participants discussed the role of play in general and games in particular, and learnt to play with a variety of puzzles and board games in sequenced order of complexity. A lending library of games permitted them to borrow games for use with their own children.

Another highly successful effort were the toy-making workshops, where the women learnt to make toys from scrap or inexpensive materials. While making the toys, the counsellors explained the toys' function in furthering the child's development: each toy was chosen according to its appropriateness for use at a certain developmental stage, and with a clearly defined purpose in mind.

In our first attempt to run this activity, we did not have a formal registration, with the result that there was no sense of obligation to participate regularly, and different women showed up for each session. We concluded that in all respects, closed groups with pre-registration, running for short periods of 2-3 months (8-10 sessions) would be most successful.

After running three workshops in toy-making (one of them at the Ben-Gurion centre for ultra-orthodox women who normally refused to mingle with the community, at their request), we concluded that these workshops were an ideal way of introducing basic concepts of child development and the role of play, provided that the course was carefully structed, with each toy that was prepared serving as a proto-type and with the toys presented in developmental-stage sequence. The experience garnered from these first attempts provided the basic for the following year's workshops, which were carefully planned and prepared.

At the Eli Cohen centre, a sewing circle was organized, in which women learnt to sew simple children's clothes, using primarily discarded clothes of their own which were cut down. For most of these women this was their first experience in copying and cutting out a pattern and using a sewing-machine.

These group meetings were as much a social activity as a learning experience; women took turns bringing refreshments, and the chat over coffee and cake were at least as important to them as the actual purpose of the workshop. We made a point of encouraging them to spend part of the morning playing with their children and utilizing the wealth of equipment available at the centre. Mothers tended to drop by informally on other days for a chat or a cup of tea. At the Eli Cohen centre, many women also made use of the coin-operated washing machines available, and the centre began to develop into a neighbourhood gathering place.

Several attempts to organize general meetings of the mothers of the children participating in the afternoon activities were disappointing both as regards the number of mothers attending, and the outcome of these meetings; the women tended to be passive - and we had difficulty getting across our message that the centres were not a service provided for them, but a community facility whose success depended on the degree to which they became actively involved in its running.

The attempt to activate mothers' committees was also rather disappointing. In both centres, two successful holiday celebrations were organized for mothers and children, with the committees playing an active role: however, women were reluctant to assume responsibility over an extended period of time, and all initiative came from the counsellors and not the mothers themselves. Perhaps this should not have surprised us: on the whole, the women with initiative and ambition in the neighbourhoods were also those who made a concerted effort to go out to work. (Despite much talk of unemployment, work for women, especially in the low-paid textile industries, seemed to be available).

The year's activities were summarized and evaluated at several levels: in discussions held with the two groups of mothers who had participated in the courses "You and Your Child", with the staff of the centres, and with the professional staff of the project, and finally in the summary report prepared by the neighbourhood-centre programme's superviser, Aviva Kribus, which also included recommendations for the coming year:

"In view of everything that happened at the centres this year (and I believe that a great deal was accomplished), I believe that emphasis should be placed in the coming year on parent participation in activities at the centre. A training programme for mothers (run by the para-professional counsellors) should be planned, in which mothers would learn how to work with children at the centre; at the same time mothers should be organized to do so. Some of the possibilities are:

(1) play-groups run by mothers on a rota basis, with a regular group of mothers and children participating, and a committee of mothers responsible for organization of the group and the programme. The existance of such groups, meeting several time a week, would free the mothers for other activities.

(2) Participation of mothers in running the children's activities in the afternoon, on a rota basis. This would permit reduction of staff from 3 to 2. The group of mothers participating would have to receive some training and supervision, especially as regards the educational approach according to which the centres are run.

(3) More active participation of mothers in running the MASLUL programme - in preparing books, games, and visual aids. I also propose organizing workshops for mothers to make didactic games.

I also suggest that mothers who are active in the centres should be involved in the future both as participants (to further consolidate their skills and knowledge) and in the organization of study and activity groups. More emphasis needs to be placed on activating mothers' committees effectively. A possibility worth considering is organizing sub-committees for specific tasks: to organize play groups; to organize mothers' participation in the children's afternoons activities; to teach cooking and baking, etc. I believe that unless a committee has specific tasks to fulfill, it does not function effectively and eventually falls apart.

Within the framework of in-service training, the following topics should be dealt with:

1. children's art and creativity
2. development of the child aged 3-6 (not covered in the course)
3. activity areas for children in the centres (specifically, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts underlying the different type of activities)
4. musical activities with children.

The above topics should be pursued with the counsellors responsible for children's activities. Similary, those counsellors responsible for the morning programme with mothers need training in how to activate and work with adults, in order to enable them to assume direct responsibility for running activities with mothers.

We should be aware of the fact that our intensive work with mothers leads to a gap in understanding and perception between the mothers and the fathers as regards the children's education. We should investigate the possibility of holding monthly parents meetings together with the fathers, devoted to specific topics. I feel that this is an area which demands special attention and effort. Another possibility is organizing fathers around specific activities connected with the centre - ie., preparing a junk play-ground; organizing a "children's day").

Lastly, the need exists to intensify community outreach, especially in the Ben Gurion neighbourhood".

Aviva Kribus.

3. The Parent Education Programme and Play-Corners in Pediatric Clinic Waiting Rooms.

The pediatric needs of Ofakim are served by two Kupat Holim (Histadrut Health Fund) clinics for sick children, and two Ministry of Health 'Well-Baby' clinics, functioning in cooperation with each other. All of the town's infants and toddlers and their mothers are regular visitors at one or another of these clinics. During peak hours, each waiting room may contain up to 20 children, their parents and siblings. The boredom and discomfort attendant on waiting in cramped and crowded quarters tend to increase friction and tension which beg relief. On the other hand, these waiting rooms provide in effect both the setting and captive audience for the instruction of parents in educational play and activities with their children, information and guidance while their children are able to play in a relaxed and stimulating atmosphere. In cooperation with the pediatric staff of the clinics, two play corners were set up in the waiting-rooms of the 'B' clinic in the spring of 1979, equipped with toys and play materials and staffed by two of the project's para-professional counsellors.

During the following year, two additional play-corners were opened, in the Kupat Holim "A" clinic and the "A" Well-Baby clinic. The play-corners were enthusiastically received by both staff and client population and had an almost immediate effect on the behaviour and attitudes of the latter to the clinic.

Running the play-corners and parent education programme in the clinic waiting rooms is both the most challenging and the most frustrating of the various activities in which the project's para-professional staff is engaged. On one hand, the clinic waiting rooms are an area potentially reached by all Ofakim pre-school children, their parents or caretakers, and as such an invaluable setting for disseminating information on good parenting practices, modelling desirable kinds of adult-child interaction, and interesting parents in various project programmes. On the other hand, contact with parents is brief and random and often takes place under less than optimal conditions of overcrowding, discomfort, tension and irritation. Whereas this programme has been singularly effective in reducing children's tension and relieving their boredom by providing toys, books and play-facilities, interaction with parents has not come up to our expectations. This led to a re-definition of priorities and objectives and a decision to concentrate all our efforts on developing effective means of working with parents in this difficult situation.Called for was first of all the changing of the staff's self-image and their image in the eyes of the client population from "toy-lady" to counsellor, reorganizing the physical setting so that toys would be made available to the child only via the parent, and most important of all, initiating an intensive staff training programme. This took the form of both individual guidance and supervision and group in-service training sessions.

Lila Namir, the programme's supervisor, worked with the team of para-professional counsellors on clarification of goals and the behavioral translation of these goals into practice, and on the formulation of a parent-education programme. A concerted effort was made to enhance the counsellors' (i.e.) self-image.

Effective use was made of video for this purpose, both to analyze and correct the para-professional counsellors' activities and to model appropriate interactions and behaviours.

The increasing emphasis on parent education and parent involvement led us to stress the counsellors' role in stimulating parent interest, demonstrating play activities, modelling appropriate child-adult interaction, and transmitting information. This also demanded furthering their knowledge of child-development and child-rearing topics - especially those most likely to arise in discussion with parents- and a "play-repertoire" was developed together with the staff, consisting of a variety of home-made and bought toys, puzzles, books, games and play-materials; in training sessions the purpose, use and presentation of each item was discussed. The counsellors also familiarized themselves with the reading material which we had begun to make available for parents (ie., the Open University's "First Years of Life" series). We stressed the importance of demonstration materials - especially of the home-made variety, which parents could also be encouraged to make and use (ie., crib toys, mobiles, hand-puppets, home-made books, matching and sorting games, etc.), and each counsellor prepared a selection of the above for use in her play-corner.

The counsellors were encouraged to utilize the curriculum outline which had been introduced into the EMRA programme and adapt the various activities to their specific settings to approach parents directly, and to work with individual parents and children.

Recording and reporting procedures were improved; and counsellors wrote up daily logs in which they reported the days events: what activities they had initiated, what parents they established contact with and for what purpose, etc. By the end of the year there was marked improvement in the level of functioning of the play-corners: both goals and the means for their implementation had become more clearly defined, a rich selection of educational materials had been assembled and prepared, and the counsellors had acquired a much clearer concept of their role. Nonetheless, it was felt that we still fell short of attaining our goal of parent stimulation and involvement. It had become clear that the personality and personal qualifications of the counsellors were perhaps the key to success, given the difficult and challenging setting of the clinic waiting rooms, where contacts with parents was brief, and the atmosphere often tense and distracting. We concluded that the counsellors filling this role needed to be strong and mature personalities, able to approach parents with confidence and break down barriers. No less, they needed to be able to function independently in complex and ambiguous situations, which often called for a high measure of both tact and firmness. Two of the four counsellors working in the programme hardly filled this bill, and at the end of the year, despite our heavy investment in in-service training, we concluded that there was no alternative to terminating their employment.

Throughout the year, we maintained excellent working relations with the medical staff of the clinics. A number of meetings were held in which a variety of joint activities were planned, such as preparing written handouts on various preventive health issues. However, the clinics were subject to constant staff turnover (and often, lack of staff) and little came of these plans.

Nonetheless, the pediatricians found time to meet periodically with the project's para-professional staff in in-service training sessions in which various health issues, such as viral illnesses, drug-abuse, burns, etc. were discussed.

Our repeated attempts to continue the "Preparation for Childbirth and Parenthood" classes which we had run jointly with the Ministry of Health's "Well-Baby" clinic nurses, were unsuccessful. Apparently, we had trespassed into an area which was considered the domain of the Ministry of Health, and it was made fairly clear that cooperation with us in this area was not going to be encouraged. Attempts made by the nurses to organize classes on their own were not successful either.

Allthough considerable progress had been made during the year towards developing a more effective goal-orientated programme, the limitations of the staff had frustrated some of these efforts. The general concensus that emerged from the discussions held by the professional staff at the end of the year, in which the programmes' activities were summarized and evaluated, was that changes would have to be effected in the staff before further progress could be made.

In her summary report, Lila Namir, the programme's supervisor, proposed the following agenda for the coming year:

1. to strive towards maximal independent functioning on the part of the counsellors in the clinic play-corners;
2. to enrich the equipment available in the clinic for parent education, and to provide materials and facilities for parents to make educational toys while waiting;
3. to stress the parent-counselling tasks of the para-professional counsellors, rather than the activation of children - even if parents remain passive: that is, to distribute play materials only to parents, at their request, and at their responsibility;

4. to close down the "B" clinic co... until such a time as a new counsellor would be available (after the next training-course);

5. whenever circumstances permit, to work individually on an on-going basis with a small number of mothers not participating in the EMRA programme because of geographic considerations. These mothers would be recommended to us by the nurses in the Well-Baby clinic, on the basis of need;

6. to try to affect parent attitudes and behaviour in regard to a limited number of topics, especially toilet training, punishment and threats, forcible feeding - through individual discussions with parents and by guiding them to appropriate literature.

By the end of the year, negotiations with the Association for the Advancement of Health Services in the Negev (a joint project of the Ministry of Health, the Histadrut Health Fund, and the Medical School of the University of the Negev, in cooperation with the JDC) were successfully concluded and the Association undertook to finance the staffing of one of the four play-corners which we were operating, as of October 1981. It was also proposed that we involve Medical School students who are doing their out-patient clinic training in Ofakim in parent-educational activities, and with their assistance, to add a health-education component to the programme.

4. The Tutorial Programme

The tutorial programme for children at risk in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood developed as an offshoot of the neighbourhood centre activities and our previous involvement in the elementary schools serving the neighbourhood. It was conceived as a partial answer to the special problems of children at the beginning of their school careers, from large and culturally impoverished families unable to provide their children with the necessary measures of support, direction and stimulation - in other words, children who stood little chance of breaking out of the vicious circle of deprivation.

The programme, planned as a pilot project, was financed by the Educational Betterment Project of the Ministry of Education, and conceived, planned and supervised by Shoshana Sfarzada, a member of the project staff born and raised in Ofakim and trained in educational counselling. 10 high-school juniors were matched with 10 2nd grade pupils, and we stressed the role of the tutor as older friend and mentor as well as positive role-model. The main concern of the programme was the stimulation and enrichment of the child in various areas - affective and social no less than cognitive.(The term "tutor" is perhaps misleading, since help with lesson preparation played almost no role in the programme). Similarly, we hoped to strengthen these children's self-image and self-confidence. The ten children participating were chosen on the recommendation of teachers, educational counsellors, and the staff of the neighbourhood centre. All of the children came from families with more than 4 children; they shared common problems: learning and behavioural problems, difficulties in communicating verbally and in establishing positive relations with other children, and a low self-image, expressed alternately in the form of aggression, excessive shyness and introversion. Interestingly,we found that the information of the para-professional counsellors at the centre was most reliable - the teachers tended to view only aggressive pupils (who created disturbances) as problematic, considering the withdrawn and quiet child as having no problems.

The tutors were all volunteers from the local high-schools. Shoshana met with the junior classes at the two local high-schools (we decided not to approach seniors, who were faced with problems of matriculation exams, etc.) to explain the programme and its aims - stressing the intrinsic rewards that they themselves would derive from this activity in terms of their own development. Although scholastic achievement was not one of the criterea for selection, the 12 volunteers (all girls) were outstanding pupils, sharing qualities of curiosity, a desire to try out their own abilities, and a concern for people.

Some of them came themselves from family backgrounds similar to that of the children.

The first two months were devoted to training the tutors for their role. The group met weekly for 8 training sessions, aimed at broadening their understanding of the needs and problems of the children, their social background and its influence, and at providing them with the skills necessary to work effectively with the children. Interpersonal communication and the development of a repetoire of suitable activities were key elements of this training programme. The group tried out all of the planned activities on itself, noting and analyzing their own reactions and feelings. These weekly training sessions continued after the actual tutoring had begun, and the group went on to examine the various concepts on which the programme was based: learning through discovery, creativity, imagination, self-expression, etc. These meetings, which continued until the end of the schoolyear, contributed a great deal to the tutors own self-development and personal enrichment, and helped them to understand themselves - obviously an important concern of any teenager. No less, the experience enhanced their own self-image.

Parallel to this initial training period, contact was established by the supervisor with the parents of the children, to whom the programme was explained, and whose permission had to be granted. Without exception, the response was positive - on the whole these parents were concerned with helping their children, and aware of their own limitations. The supervisor also accompanied each tutor to her first meeting with the child and his family. Initially we had planned for all sessions to take place in the child's home, but we were forced to modify this. Some of the children were too ashamed of their homes to have the tutor come there - and the tutors themselves lacked the experience and skill to overcome the children's (and their own) blocks.

Thus the meetings between the tutors and the children, (for a minimum of 2 hours weekly) were usually held either at the tutor's house or at the neighbourhood centre. These meetings were devoted to playing games, reading stories, poems and excerpts from the newspaper and discussing them, short excursions, visits to the library to chose books, solving puzzles, etc. Each tutor, under the on-going supervision of Shoshana, planned her sessions according to the needs and interests of the specific child, aiming especially to broaden his experiences and encourage the child to express himself verbally and otherwise Shoshana met with each tutor individually on a bi-weekly basis. Thursday afternoons all the children in the programme met together at the neighbourhood centre.

We hoped that by meeting some of the child's basic needs for attention and encouragement, as well as providing him with tools for coping more effectively, we would also be creating the pre-conditions for more effective learning, and that the various enrichment activities would also improve the child's cognitive skills, providing him with tools for analysis and problem solving.

We viewed as no less important the objectives we hoped to achieve in working with the youths engaged in tutoring: a broadening of personal horizons and enrichment, and the fostering of responsibility towards the community and willingness to personally participate in grappling with its problems and needs.

The programme was of too short duration (actual tutoring began in January and continued until the beginning of June) to enable us to evaluate its efficacy as regards the children; as far as the tutors were concerned, the benefits they derived from the programme were very much in evidence.

At the end of the school-year,we began negotiations with the high-school headmasters regarding the coming year. We hoped to be able to select the tutors before the summer vacation, so as to be able to begin work immediately when the new term began. Possibly inspired by our own efforts, the high-school had decided to develop their own school-based tutorial programme, matching scholastically successful upper-grade pupils with lower-grade ones in need of tutoring - and we were told that the candidates for our programme were obviously the same group the school planned to involve in its programme. Under these circumstances, we concluded that we had no choice but to discontinue what in our eyes, at least, was a promising experiment.

5. The Early Childhood Resource Centre

The Early Childhood Resource Centre which evolved out of the workshops in parent involvement which we had been running with varied success for kindergarten teachers during Phase I of the project, was opened in December 1980 in one section of the Ben Gurion neighbourhood centre. The staff of the centre Sasona Barzilai, an experienced kibbutz kindergarten teacher trained at Oranim Teachers' Training Seminary, and Shoshana Azran, one of the project's para-professional counsellors, each working half-time, devoted most of their efforts during the first months to the development and organization of resource materials, especially the fairly extensive collection of didactic games and teaching aids which are to be found at the centre together with instructions for their construction and use. Once a week, the centre was open to kindergarten and nursery school teachers who were able to avail themselves of the workshop facilities in the centre and the guidance of the centre's staff both in the preparation of various teaching materials and games and in planning programmes with parents. The centre was also made available to the kindergarten teachers for their in-service training sessions and for workshops with parents.

Cordial relations were established with the Ministry of Education kindergarten inspectors, and under their auspices a number of special workshops were organized, in which we utilized the didactic materials developed in Oranim. One workshop was devoted to the theme of the junk play-ground, its function and how to organize and equip it; another workshop to rhyming games and finger rhymes; yet another, towards the end of the year, to reading readiness. In the last trimester, groups of parents organized by the kindergarten teachers, utilized the centre facilities to prepare didactic games for their children.

The mini-lending library project, which had been initiated in Phase I, continued to function. 19 kindergarten participated. The kindergarten teachers collected money from the parents to purchase 20 books, and these were matched by books lent to the kindergarten by the project. Children exchanged books weekly. This project assured that every parent (reluctant as some may have been) read to their children regularly. The books were on the whole well-cared for, and were collected for re-use at the end of the year.

The pedagogical library at the centre was less well utilized; we found that on the whole the kindergarten teachers were not auto-didactically inclined, and tended to content themselves with the regular in-service training sessions (at which attendance was compulsory). In addition to the Ofakim kindergarten teachers, those from the Merchavim moshav area also began to frequent and utilize the centre. The kindergarten inspectors, who had turned into enthusiastic supporters of the centre, began to bring kindergarten teachers from other towns to visit.

Several attempts were made to organize workshops and training session for the staff of the Na'amat (Histadrut Women's Organization) nurseries and creches, but these were unsuccessful.

Since the caregivers in the creches worked until 4 P.M.,it was difficult to coordinate a time convenient for them; nor were we especially encouraged by their supervisor. (Once more, we were apparently treading on some one else's turf).

The almost immediate success of the centre came almost as a surprise to us - it answered a real and perceived need, since the kindergarten teachers had up to that point had no place to meet and little systematic guidance, not to speak of very limited resources. Sasona Barzilai's professional experience and talents as a teacher trainer were undoubtedly the key factor in the centre's rapid and successful development. In terms of the project's goals of enhancing parent involvement in education, we now had a unique opportunity to indirectly, via the kindergarten teacher, to influence this involvement effectively, with the blessing of the Ministry of Education.

6. The Programme for Teenage Girls

As a result of our involvement with young mothers in the EMRA programme, and our hightened awareness of the problems resulting from too early marriage and inadequatepreparation for family life and parenthood, we felt a need to reach out to teenage girls. We conceived the idea of establishing a centre in the Remet neighbourhood which would serve two closely related populations - the young mothers of the Remet neighbourhood, and teenage girls from 14 to 18 - especially those who had dropped out of school and lacked a supportive framework. Our primary objective was to provide a "place-to-belong-to", a warm, inviting environment where they could spend their free time. Through appropriate programmes, we hoped to achieve a number of objectives; strengthening of positive self-image, improving interpersonal relations including the mother-daughter relationship, creating a healthy social environment within the community, preparation for dealing with herself as an adult member of the community and for family life.

We proposed the development of a programme for teenage girls in the project-proposal for Phase II. However, the budget which was finally approved was somewhat smaller than our original request, and we realized that we would not be able to implement the programme unless we were able to find additional support and financing. We discussed our idea with the director of the Social Welfare Services in Ofakim, who liked the idea and was ready to cooperate with us in the venture.

In the spring of 1981, Ofakim was approved as one of the town targeted for Project Renewal activities. A steering committee and various sub-committees were formed, which began gathering information on the needs of the town and its inhabitants, and proposals were solicited and tendered by various groups and organizations. In May 1981 we presented a proposal, co-sponsored by the Social-Welfare Services to the local steering committee of Project Renewal, and began looking around for suitable facilities. (The proposal was eventually approved in October 1981).

7. Staff Training

One of the guiding precepts of the project from its earliest days has been the training of members of the community to run project activities, with the aim of decreasing the community's dependency on outside help and assuring the ultimate sustainability of project programmes. The training programme has thus been an integral and important part of the project throughout - as has the actual work of the para-professional team trained by the project in the implementation of its programmes. We have never regarded the para-professional status as a low-level (and ipso facto, limited and limiting) one; we rather prefer the Hebrew designation of pre-professional, with its implication of built-in opportunities for growth and development. Thus we have throughout viewed the para-professional training course run yearly by the project as the first step in an on-going process of the upgrading of skills and the expansion of responsibility.

Similarly, professionals and pre-professionals have worked in the project as equal partners, sharing knowledge and learning from each other's experiences. In operational terms, staff training comprises three elements: the basic training course, weekly in-service training sessions and occasional workshops, seminars and study trips, and individual guidance and supervision. Our investment in the latter two is much greater than in many other frameworks working with para-professionals - but we have found this investment to be more than worthwile in all respects. We often feel that this is perhaps the most important contribution of the project to the community's development.

The training course

In basic structure and methodology, we have adheredto the design developed for the first training course held in 1978, which is described in detail in the Summary Report on Phase I. The basic curriculum continues to cover the three concentric circles of our concern: the child, the family, and the community; methodology is based on theoretical learning linked to direct personal experience of the subject at hand. On the basis of past experience, we have made the selection process more stringent, stressing intrinsic qualities- native intelligence, sensitivity, motivation-rather than prior formal schooling, insofar as these can be assessed. We have added a written interview to the selection process, to increase the validity of our choices.

In October 1980, the project conducted its third training-course of five weeks duration.

Posters advertising registration for the course were hung in various public places such as the municipality, community centre, clinics, bus stops and post office; social workers, community health nurses and other professionals in contact with the community-at-large were approached to recommend suitable candidates.

The criteria for participation in the course were:

1. Ofakim resident;
2. mother of one or more children;
3. 10 or more years of formal education;
4. motivation towards work with people and interest in work with young children;
5. openness and sensitivity; reliability and steadiness;
6. ability to function as a member of a team.

Candidates were invited to the project's office to fill out the initial application form which included a curriculum vitae. This was in effect the first step in the screening process: of the 50 applicants, 30 were disqualified on the basis of inadequate reading and writing ability, too little schooling, poor references, etc. The next step consisted of home visits carried out by the project team. This enabled us to become acquainted with the candidates in their natural surroundings and to observe the manner in which the woman interacted with her own children. Following this step, each candidate was invited for a personal interview which consisted of two parts: an oral interview with a panel composed of project staff and a representative of the Local Council, and a written questionnaire dealing with child-rearing practices. The candidate's answers intimated both her ability to express herself in writing and her knowledge and attitudes towards child-rearing. The cumulative results of these interviews provided basis for the selection of ten women to participate in the training course. The participants ranged in age from 24 to 42 years, with a minimum of two and a maximum of 7 children. Their formal education ranged from 8 grades (an extraordinary exception was made in this case) to 12 grades plus post-secondary training.

The familial quality of inter-personal relations in a small town, as well as the loyalties and ties which develop within a group while studying and working together make subsequent dismissal from the course or from work extremely painful and disruptive; thus it is very important that initial judgements be as accurate as possible.

These are the reasons why so much effort and thought were devoted to the screening process. In addition to the processes described, particular attention was paid to two other elements: a thorough check of character references, and the least objective of the chosen criteria - the collective 'gut feeling' of the interviewing team.

The course was conducted over a five-week period, five days a week, from 8.30 to 12.30 A.M. The course covered the following topics:

Topic	Hours
Family and Community	10
Development stages	6
The home: the child's ecology	8
Behaviour problems and behaviour management	4
Childrens' literature	4
Play Theory	6
Play with junk materials (workshop)	2
Creative play materials (workshop)	4
Dramatic play (workshop)	4
Movement (workshop)	4
Observation and recording (field trips and discussions)	12
Instruction and curriculum	6
Interpersonal group dynamics	20
Group tour	4
	94

All ten women accepted to the course completed it, yet we were able to accept only six to work in the project, five as home-visitors and one for work in the neighbourhood centres. Each of the new home-visitors was teamed with an experienced counsellor and spent her first week on the job observing actual field work.

In-service training

As mentioned earlier, the weekly in-service training sessions are a key element of project operations. Two hours weekly were devoted to project-specific training for each group of counsellors: EMRA home-visitors, neighbourhood centre workers, and clinic play-corner staff. From time to time, two groups combined to work on a topic of joint concern, and on occasion, all of the staff met together - for example, when visiting lecturers were invited. As the counsellors gained in practical experience, it became possible to raise the level of in-service training and attain a growing level of professionalization. No less important, both in the training sessions and in the individual supervision, we worked in a variety of ways to enhance the counsellors' self-reliance, initiative, and self-confidence - qualities which, given the background of the women, were often insufficiently developed, while of major importance to their work.

During the 1980-1981 activity year, programme contents became more clearly defined and structured, and the main thrust of in-service training was to equip the counsellors with the knowledge and skills to implement the programmes and their educational objectives effectively. The capacity of the counsellors to keep pace with the ever increasing demands was a source of great satisfaction - and participating in this on-going process of personal growth a rewarding experience for the professional staff.

Video proved to be an invaluable training aid, lending itself to a number of uses:

1. We utilized video in a training sequence consisting of
   a. observation and recording 'in situ',
   b. discussion and analysis of the observed activity and/or actors,
   c. post-training session recording of changes effected.
2. Video-tapes were recorded modelling behaviour and interactions appropriate to various situations commonly encountered in project activities.
3. Training materials developed by other sources - such as Oranim Study Centre for Children's Activities, or the Open University's "First Years of Life" series were effectively utilized.

C. Project Organization

With the beginning of Phase II operation in January 1981, a concerted effort was made to increasingly shift responsibility for project planning and implementation to the community itself, with the view of thereby enhancing autonomous community functioning and developing institutions which would be able to assure the ongoing operation of activities after the termination of the project. The Workplan for 1981 aimed at the involvement of community members at four levels:

1. the community level
2. the professional staff level
3. the para-professional staff level
4. the neighbourhood level.

1. The community level

In April 1981 the Association for Education and Community was set up in Ofakim, composed of representatives of the Ofakim Local Council, the Ofakim Community Centre Association and the Institute for Education and Community Development. An executive committee consisting of four representatives of the first two organizations and of the project director meets regularly to decide on all policy issues, including budget, employment of personnel, new programmes, etc. Despite our initial fears, this group has succeeded in working together most amicably and has taken its responsibilities very seriously. Since the members of the executive committee are influential in other spheres, their commitment to the project has in many ways been influential in furthering its legitimization and acceptance by the community as well as its expansion.

2. The professional staff level

With the beginning of Phase II, systematic planning, reporting and evaluation of project activities by sub-project supervisors became institutionalized, with monthly work-plans and summaries of the previous month's activities serving as the basis for regular staff meetings.

3. The para-professional staff level

A concerted effort is being made to increasingly involve the para-professional counsellors in operational planning and on-going evaluation of project activities. We found that the process of planning operations according to objectives to be achieved, taking into account factors such as available resources, needs and expectations of the client population, constraints and possible obstacles, keeping accurate and objective records of the implementation of planned operations, and evaluating outcome dispassionately - a fairly sophisticated procedure - is certainly not beyond their abilities, but is as much an acquired skill as those which they had needed to learn in order to function effectively in their roles. The supervisors of each of the sub-projects have begun to pay special attention to developing these skills in the framework of the in-service training and the individual supervision. For many of the women, this is a totally new way of approaching a situation, a new set of habits to be learnt.

In March 1981, all of the counsellors participated in a planning exercise, in which they were required to

1. define the needs and problems of the population with whom they were working,
2. propose ways of meeting those needs,
3. consider the resources needed to put their proposals into effect.

The fact that the results of this exercise broadly matched our own planning exercises would seem to indicate a high degree of internalization of the project and its aims. At a second planning session, in which all the project staff participated, we summarized and evaluated the year's activities and considered ways of improving the programme in the coming year.

4 The neighbourhood level

As mentioned earlier, the results of our efforts to organize parents' committees at the neighbourhood centres have fallen short of our expectations. People are reluctant to assume responsibility, easily frustrated, and unused to sustained effort in activities of this nature.

This is not surprising when viewed in the context of the apathy, dependency and low self-esteem which characterize a large segment of the community in which we work - and for which the project is attempting to provide an antidote. We have reached the conclusion that only through systematic community work can we hope to effect a change, which under the best conditions will be gradual.

D. Coordination and Cooperation

We have made some headway in coordinating our activities and cooperating with other agencies and organizations in the community on various programmes. As we stated in the work-plan, we hope thereby to increase the project's impact and influence on the life of the community. In a series of meetings with the Social Welfare Services, the Psychological Counselling Service, the pediatric staff of the clinics, and the Na'amat Women's Organization of the Histadrut, we investigated various ways of cooperating with each other, and where possible, coordinating efforts. Similarly, we have established excellent working relations with the Ministry of Education's kindergarten inspectors, and begun working together on joint training programmes. In March 1981, Ofakim was included in PROJECT RENEWAL (a national programme for the rehabilitation of depressed urban and development town areas), and we were invited to participate in planning sessions of the educational sub-committee in an advisory capacity. We also participated in the meetings of the sub-committee on community, health and welfare, and our proposals for the establishment of a neighbourhood centre for young mothers and teenage girls in the Remet area was approved by the Steering Committee, as was our proposal for the extension of the EMRA programme under the auspices of Project Renewal.

E. Evaluation

An evaluation programme for Phase II (1981-1983) was prepared by Dr. Amir Ben Porat of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, outlining project objectives, criteria for evaluation, evaluation instruments to be used, and time schedule. This programme was prepared together with the project's professional staff, with objectives and criteria clarified in joint meetings devoted to this purpose. The periodic feed-back which we have been receiving from the evaluation team has been of invaluable aid to further project development. The evaluation report on the period from the beginning of Phase II in January 1981 until the end of the activity year 1980-1981 accompanies this report as a separate document.

F. Dissemination

1. The Moshav Satellite Project

During the summer of 1980, as we began preparing the proposal for Phase II of Project Education and Community in Ofakim, we felt that the time was ripe to propose a satellite project in the neighbouring moshavim (smallholders cooperative agricultural settlements). The idea of developing a community education project simultaneously in a development town and in immigrant moshavim had been proposed originally in 1977, and had been rejected by the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Three years later, it seemed that two factors justified raising the question of a moshav satellite project again:

1. A number of successful programmes had been developed in Ofakim, which we believed to be appropriate and valid for dissemination to other social settings. The neighbouring moshavim, with a population demographically not too different, and yet representing a very different type of social organization, seemed ideal for this purpose. No less interesting was the challenge of transfering social and educational concepts which had been shaped in an essentially urban setting to a more isolated and more socially cohesive rural one.

2. The last three years had highlighted and exacerbated the problems facing the immigrant moshavim: economic, educational and social. Our contact with teachers and settlers from the neighbouring moshavim reinforced my belief that these communities were no less (if not more) in need of programs fostering social and educational development - especially programs such as the ones developed in the Ofakim project, aimed especially towards the enhancement of local autonomy through the training of local people in the skills required for self-organization and self-functioning. The tendency, both abroad and in this country, to regard the established and prosperous moshavim of the pre-state era and the struggling and often depressed immigrant moshavim of the post-state era in undifferentiated fashion, had contributed to the situation where the needs of this population tended to be underestimated in comparison to those of the development towns and city slum areas.

We re-established contact with the Regional Council of the Merchavim area, who were enthusiastic at the idea of working together with us in a joint project, and met a number of times with representatives of the Regional Council in order to prepare the project proposal which was submitted to the Board fo Trustees of the Foundation in September 1980. This proposal called for working with three moshavim, K'lachim, Pa'ameh Tashaz, and S'deh Zvi.

Final approval of the moshav satellite project was delayed until February 1981. Since we had avoided making any kind of commitment prior to final approval and suspended all further contact until this was forthcoming, it was only now possible to begin laying the groundwork for actual project implementation. At this point we were most fortunate in finding just the right person to direct the satellite project.

Hasia Levin, a pre-school teacher with many years experience both in the U.S. and in Israel, had just recently returned from the U.S. after completing her M.A. in Early Childhood Education and was working as a supervisor of students' field-work in the Hebrew University's Schwartz Programme (a post-graduate programme training senior personnel for community-based early childhood programs). Though living in Beer-Sheva, some 50 kilometers away from the target moshavim, Hasia agreed to undertake the task of developing a satellite project in the moshavim intimately linked to the Ofakim Project, and joined our staff on a part time basis in May 1981 (as of July 1981, Hasia began working full-time with the project).

The months of May and June were devoted to establishing contact with many people directly or peripherally involved with the project, (members of the moshavim, pre-school teachers, social and community-workers, politicians, etc), getting to know them,and no less important, making ourselves and the project known to them.

As a result of these meetings the following observations were made:

1. There has never been a community based programme on the moshavim.
2. Programmes sponsored by outside organizations had quickly collapsed due to loss of interest by the women and difficulty in maintaining staff in the isolated moshavim.
3. The women were in desperate need of activity since many of them neither worked on the moshav nor had any access to work or activity outside the moshav.
4. There was no co-operation between the pre-school staff and parents of the children. Both groups felt a need for a better working relationship.

In July the work-plan and budget prepared in cooperation with the Regional Council representatives was presented to the Regional Council of Merchavim and approved at the beginning of August 1981.

Our next step was to talk to the Local Council of each moshav to explain our programme and obtain their approval. Initial contact with the members was through the community workers. We found the Local Councils co-operative and aware of the need for a local centre for their wives and young children. These meetings concentrated on two problems: which facility on the moshav could be refurbished as a parent-child centre and the financial responsibility of the moshav toward the centre.

Moshav K'lachim immediately contributed a building that was once used as a library. It needed few repairs inside but the grounds outside were uncultivated. The members took it upon themselves, with the organizational aid of the community workers, to plant shrubbery and clean the grounds. This was done immediately after our first visit.

Pa'ameh Tzshaz spent several weeks discussing the various options available. They decided upon an unused two-room house with a kitchen and bathroom. It was refurbished by the moshav members.

S'deh Zvi offered the old WIZO club; however it needed so many basic repairs that it was decided to search for another place. The old community centre was the final choice. It is very large and needed a minimum of repairs.

In early September a conflict arose over the moshav's financial responsibility. The Regional Council had signed a contract with the project which stated that the project carried about 50% of the total expenses and the Regional Council 50%. The moshav would contribute the building and be responsible for its repair. The members would also pay for the running expenses of the centre. In these terms we presented the programme to the members of the moshavim.

We had been unaware that all expenses of the Regional Council are divided 50% - 50% between the Council and the moshav that benefits from the programme or purchase. The Regional Council therefore presented each moshav with a bill for 50% of the Council's contribution to the programme. Although this was usual policy, both the members of the moshavim and the staff assumed that the project finances would be handled exactly as written in the contract. The moshavim, which were somewhat bitter, asked the Regional Council's plenum to review this issue. An agreement was eventually reached, and the programme continued as scheduled.

Two women were chosen from each moshav to attend the para-professional training course in Ofakim. Two additional women from the community which serves as the educational centre for the area were also chosen to attend the course. These women were chosen to work as counsellors in the regional 'Well Baby' clinics which serve the Merchavim region. The selection procedure included:

1. Advertising the course and inviting anyone interested to fill out a questionnaire (27 women applied)
2. Sifting out those applicants who were unacceptable for objective reasons and arranging home visits to the others.
3. A half-hour home visit.
4. Those who seemed acceptable were brought before a committee which included project staff and Regional Council representatives.

The above procedure was similar to the selection process used in Ofakim.

During the month of September a great deal of time and effort was invested in developing positive lines of communication with the community workers, the women in the course, the Regional and Local Councils and the moshav members. Meetings were arranged with the women of each moshav, where representatives were chosen to serve as the initial steering committee. There was a high level of anticipation in the moshavim as they waited for the centres to open at the end of October.

Although we were working in a completely new setting, the experience garnered in the Ofakim project helped us to avoid many pitfalls and to develop an operational plan suited to the particular circumstances and needs of the moshav population over a short period of time. The fact that we were able to utilize all the accumulated resources of the Ofakim project for this purpose - the training course, curriculum and activity plans, as well as the experience and know-how of the staff - enabled us to field a cost-effective and attractive project within a period of a few short months.

2. Dissemination to other projects and organizations

Throughout the year we have hosted visits of groups and individuals both from Israel and from abroad working in the same field and in related areas, and our programmes have aroused a great deal of interest. We have been happy to share our experience and our materials and hope that they have been of benefit to others who are trying to develop similar activities or projects.

III Project Developments 1981-1982

A. Project Objectives

We approached the fifth year of project operations with a sense of self-assurance, though not complacancy. Less of our energies needed to be devoted to the struggle for acceptance and survival. Not only had we attained by now legitimacy in the eyes of the political and the professional establishment and warm recognition from the community; we had become active partners in policy-planning and implementation in the areas of our concern - community development and early-childhood education. We had a much better understanding of the community's needs and of both its potential and its limitations, and were therefore able to achieve a better 'fit' of our programmes to the former. As the project became more institutionalized, emphasis shifted in the direction of consolidation, refinement, expansion and dissemination of programmes which have been developed rather than the pursuit of new directions and innovations - though we remained open to the latter if the opportunity presented itself. In view of these factors, our objectives for the 1981-1982 activity year remained basically the same as those defined for the prior activity year, further explicated and specified. Some of these objectives had been implemented with a relative degree of ease, others less so; we therefore planned to devote more intensive efforts to the implemention of the latter.

1. Sustainability

Overshadowing all our activities was the awareness that we were beginning to approach the time when the project would come to an end. Since the acid test of the project's success will ultimately be its viability and continuity beyond that point in time, our central goal became assuring the sustainability of our programmes. Two factors will ultimately determine the project's sustainability:

a. Institutionalization: the perception of the project's programmes and activities as integral community institutions, both by the client population and by the political and professional establishment.

In operational terms, this implies recognition by the statutory authorities and a willingness on their part to allocate resources; recognition by the political establishment and a willingnes on its part to assume responsibility for ongoing project operations; recognition by the community at the neighbourhood level and a willingness on its part to sustain the project's programmes by investing time, energy and talents to planning and carrying out the activities of their choice.

b. Community self-functioning: the assumption of direct responsibility by project participants at the neighbourhood level for programme planning and operation; the assumption of full professional responsibility by the indigenous staff for all aspects of project operations.

2. Integration

We view two types of integration as important: the integration of the various project programmes into a community-education network, and the coordination and integration of our programmes with similarly-orientated programmes of the statutory authorities and voluntary organizations. Special emphasis is being placed on integrating activities of the various sub-projects at the neighbourhood level. This kind of de-centralization and concentration on the neighbourhood as the basic unit of operations not only facilitates coordination of activities and cooperation, but provides opportunities for broader participation in planning and for assumption of greater direct responsibility. In our relations with other organizations working in the community we are beginning to move beyond coordination of activities in relevant areas to active cooperation in developing joint programmes. Given the existant tendency towards fragmentation and rivalry, this becomes a real challenge. However, the fact that the project is independent gives it degrees of freedom which so far have enabled us to make progress in this direction.

3. Dissemination

The creation of the moshav satellite project provided the first opportunity for dissemination of the integrated community development and education concept which underlies the Ofakim project and which has been articulated in the various programmes developed in Ofakim. We believe on one hand that the specific contents of community education projects must be derived from what will always be a unique combination of the people involved, their life-situation and their perceptions, and therefore no model, regardless of how successful, can be transferred directly. However, strategies and methodologies which have proven their efficacy can be applied in a variety of settings and various components of the Ofakim model are of undoubted relevancy to others, both in Israel and abroad. In this context, our successful experience in the training of indigenous personnel to run project activities is of particular importance and relevancy to others, as is the development of curriculum materials which can be used without extensive training. So far no systematic attempt has been made on our part to disseminate our experience. The mushrooming of many new community development projects throughout the country under the auspices of Project Renewal leads us to believe that the time has come for us publicise our work more extensively. One possible direction now being considered by the Institute for Education and Community Development is the development of consultative services. Another aspect of dissemination which particularly interests us is the publication of curriculum materials in a format which would make them more widely available.

B. Project Operations

1. The EMRA Home-Intervention Programme

During the 1980-1981 activity year, considerable progress was made towards implementing the goals we had set ourselves for Phase II operations: the EMRA programme had expanded to a new and needy neighbourhood, had become more cost-effective, and had institutionalized its work-procedures and its curriculum to a high degree. A concerted effort to improve the para-professional counsellors ability to function independently had begun to produce results. We had been less than successful in attaining our objective of furthering social cohesion by means of regular group meetings of mothers in each neighbourhood,partially as a result of lack of facilities in the Remet neighbourhood where we had begun to operate. In defining our operational objective for 1981-1982, we gave top priority to developing a programme of regular group meetings of mothers, as well as continuing to pursue the goals mentioned above which had already been achieved in part.
A number of new developments helped us, both directly and indirectly, in implementing the objectives outlined above:

1. The Remet Neighbourhood Centre:

A flat had finally become available in the Remet neighbourhood, and with promises of financial support from Project Renewal, we opened the new neighbourhood centre in October 1981. Though less roomy than our other centres, it did provide us with an effective base of operations in the neighbourhood, and also became the home-base of the EMRA programme.

2. The Activity Card-File:

We had finally completed the Activity Card-File, colour-coded according to developmental stages, with play and activity ideas devided into 21 categories. This served as the main resource to which the counsellors referred in planning home-visits.

3. Reduction of Supervisory Staff:

Shoshana Sfarzada left the project in order to continue her studies, and Berl Yahav assumed responsibility for supervising all aspects of the EMRA programme alone.

At the end of October, Beri went on maternity leave for three months - and the para-professional IMRA counsellors assumed direct responsibility for running the programme on their own during this period. This included recruitment and intake of new families, planning home-visits independently, and organizing and running group meetings of mothers. Self- functioning thus turned from a desired goal into reality born of necessity almost overnight. In addition, one of the experienced counsellors undertook the supervision and guidance of the two new counsellors, graduates of the last training course, who were replacing two counsellors who had left.

As in 1980-1981, 7 counsellors worked each with 10 families. Some 35 families continued from the previous year. Most of the mothers were young; many of them had heard of the programme and asked to join on their own initiative. Every family paid a fee of 100 shekel, which could be paid in installments. On the whole this did not present a problem; in the case of five families who were really in need, we waivered payment. On the other hand, two families who repeatedly shirked payment (as well as not meeting other terms of the "contract") were asked to leave the programme. We had almost no problems with attendance: mothers unable to meet with the counsellor as planned, were careful to give advance notice. On the whole, mothers were highly motivated. With the exception of the five above-mentioned families, mothers only left the programme when they became employed outside the home. Inversely, mothers leaving jobs to become housewives again would request to re-join the programme. Any opening was almost immediately filled and there was a waiting-list of families who requested a home-visitor.

In addition to the monthly group meetings of mothers, all the home-visitors made a concerted effort to interest mothers in the activities at the neighbourhood family centres - and these mothers indeed tended to be among the most active women at the centres and formed the core of the play-groups which were later organized at the centres.

The periodic staff planning sessions which we had introduced during the prior year had served to highten the counsellors' perception of the interlocking relationship between project programmes, and had led to increased cooperation in general: thus counsellors at the clinics would refer mothers to EMRA, EMRA counsellors would suggest to mothers that they make toys while waiting at the clinic, etc. The cumulative effect of four years' work (as well as the impact of other programmes, such as HIPPY) was also beginning to make itself felt in the general increased awareness of the importance of early childhood education, and this found expression in the motivation of mothers to learn how to help their children.

Mothers' Group Meetings

As mentioned earlier on, we planned a concerted campaign to organize a regular schedule of monthly meetings of mothers in the EMRA programme at the respective neighbourhood centres. We had always considered these meetings to be an integral and important part of our programme: in terms of the mothers' own needs, the weekly home-visit was but a partial answer; no less, we had been aware all along of the dangers of the mother-counsellor relationship fostering yet a new dependency. The group meetings, in which women could share their experiences and learn from each other, as well as make new friends, was an important step in the direction of community self-help and self-functioning.

The basic pattern for these meetings was carefully thought out and planned by the EMRA counsellors and their supervisor. Since mothers attended the meetings together with their children, at least part of the session would have to be devoted to mother-child activities; similarly, provisions had to made to occupy the children for those parts of the meeting devoted to discussion. We also felt that it was important to devote a good part of the meeting to some concrete, practical activity and not just to talk, since this is what the mothers valued most. Another permanent feature would be learning songs and nursery rhymes.

A number of in-service training sessions were devoted to planning the group meetings in detail, with all the counsellors contributing. The actual running of the meetings was the direct responsibility ot the counsellors. In the Ben-Gurion and Remet neighbourhoods, the counsellors joined together to organize and run the meetings. On the whole, 50-70% of the mothers participated, so that there were about 15-20 women and their children at each meeting. The group meetings in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood (where there were fewer young mothers, and only one counsellor) were of course smaller. A few women attended none of the meetings: these tended to be women with several small children and with more problematic family backgrounds. At the end of each meeting, the mother received mimeographed sheet of songs and rhymes, which she collected in a special folder. The meetings became a high-point of the programme; women looked forward to them, competed with each other to bring refreshments, and in general treated them as a social event. The following outlines the meetings that were held during the 1981-1982 activity year:

September: getting acquainted with the programme and each other; slide-show and discussion on home-made toys; songs and rhymes.

October: making a toy; song and rhymes.

November: play materials fostering creativity: play-dough, paints, crayons, etc. songs and rhymes.

December: Hanukah: involving small children in preparations for the festival: baking with children; discussion of holiday customs, symbols, foods, atmosphere in home; making a home-made booklet of holiday songs and pictures of holiday symbols; learning songs.

January: Children's books: Appropriate books for each age; how to read to the child; the value of reading to and with children: development of vocabulary, imagination, motor skills, concentration, etc.

February: Tu B'Shvat (Arbor Day): Discussion of holiday and its significance; stories and songs for children about the holiday. Activities with children, using the dried and fresh fruits eaten on the holiday: sorting (soft-hard, large-small, etc.), identifying colour, shape, taste, etc. Each mother and her child planted a small plant in a container, which the child took home.

March: Purim: appropriate costumes for small children; preparing simple costumes (hats, etc.); songs and rhymes.

May: Blocks: slide-show and discussion on blocks, their function, how to play with blocks; different kinds of blocks. Rhymes about block-building. Every mother prepared a set of small wooden blocks for her child (sanding down rough cubes of wood-scraps donated by various carpenters in the town).

June: End-of-year-party: songs, games, mothers' competitions, slide-show. Each mother received certificate, each child a present. Speeches, refreshments.

In keeping with our stated objective of reducing the dependence of the counsellors on the professional supervisor, the main thrust of in-service training and individual supervision was towards fostering those skills essential to independent functioning. In practice, this involved their introduction to a more rigorous and analytical approach to their work - in effect, to a different way of thinking than they were accustomed to.

Whereas in the passed we had emphasised the "how" of what they were doing, we now began to stress the "why": what is the rationale underlying each action and activity, what aim does it serve? This approach formed the basis of the goal-orientated planning whose importance we stressed. In operational terms this meant that every activity: home-visit, group meetings, etc. had to be carefully planned in detail, with objectives and means and anticipated outcomes clearly defined and understood. The counsellors were directly responsible for planning home-visits and group meetings on their own, and on reporting the outcomes of these activities; in their meetings with the supervisor these outcomes - both successes and failures - were analyzed and discussed. This approach proved to be very rewarding: the more we demanded, the more the counsellors rose to the challenge. They became more self-aware and self-assured, and proud of their enhanced professional status. Working together regularly as a group also resulted in a remarkable degree of group cohesion, mutual aid and support.

The remaining in-service training sessions were usually problem-orientated: toilet training, discipline, preventive health care, etc. In the individual supervisory sessions, more emphasis was placed on family dynamics and discussion of problems specific to the families with whom the counsellors were working.

To our surprise, the two new counsellors adapted very quickly, and after a short time it became impossible to distinguish between them and the more experienced ones. Whether this was the result of more rigorous initial selection, or a response to the much higher standards we had begun to set was not clear. What however became remarkably clear was that the potential of these women, given the right encouragement and support, was, if not unlimited, much greater than we ourselves had been aware.

Some 20 of the children in the EMRA programme in 1981-1982 entered the pre-kindergarten framework in the fall of 1982, and we hope to conduct some form of follow-up to see if the results of our intervention can be identified.

The Activity Card-File which we had introduced at the beginning of the year helped to enrich the repertoire of activities, and its modular structure (combined with the enhanced ability of the counsellors to identify specific developmental needs) enabled the counsellors to tailor the contents of each home-visit to the developmental level and needs of each child. We continued to expand the repertoire of activities during the year: the EMRA counsellors worked in small groups on this task during the Passover vacation; two of the counsellors who were particularly gifted in this area continued at this task during the month of July. We plan to publish the Activity File in book form, for our own use and for the use of other projects.

In conclusion, it would appear that we had succeeded in meeting the objectives we had set ourselves for this activity year, and even to move beyond them. An important development was the fact that Project Renewal became an active partner in the EMRA programme, paying the salary of 3 of the 7 counsellors in the programme. In terms of assuring the continuity of the programme beyond the life-span of the project, this is of great importance.

2. The Neighbourhood Family Centres

During 1980-1981, the project operated two Neighbourhood Family Centres in the Eli Cohen and Ben-Gurion neighbourhoods, which functioned as operational bases for a wide variety of educational-community activities for adults and children. At each of these centres mornings were devoted to activities for mothers: discussion groups on child-rearing and education, toy-making workshops, sewing classes, etc. Mothers' committees set up in each of the centres successfully organized a number of activities such as holiday celebrations and a used clothing exchange. However, these committees did not prove themselves capable of sustained effort. Similarly, we had hoped that those mothers who had participated regularly in the weekly child-rearing and education classes would form the core of parent-run play-groups; however, when this idea was proposed to the group the response was lukewarm at best, and the idea had to be abandoned for the time being.

30-40 children aged 3-6 participated daily in the afternoon activities at the centres: a non-directive, free-flowing enrichment programme designed to foster cooperation, creativity and learning through discovery. One afternoon weekly was devoted to a programme of didactic games and story-telling with a variety of audio-visual and dramatic aids, especially designed for joint parent-child participation. Although we had hoped that parents would begin to play a role in the actual running of activities for children, we had not succeeded in making much headway in this direction, and had become aware of the fact that unless we provided them with some systematic guidance and training, they would be unable to muster either the self-confidence or the skills to do so.

At the beginning of the 1981-1982 school year we opened our third neighbourhood family centre in the Remet neighbourhood - an area where we had been working for some time with mothers and toddlers in the EMRA programme, and where the lack of a physical base for activities had been felt acutely.

The new Remet centre was housed in a small flat (the only available facility) and financed by Project Renewal. The plan which had been approved by the steering committee of Project Renewal called for utilization of the centre during afternoon and evening hours as an activity centre for teenage girls. This of course meant that unlike the other neighbourhood centres, no play facilities existed for children in the afternoons - despite the fact that this neighbourhood had a large population of pre-school children. We had of course been aware of this need, and had submitted a separate proposal which called for utilization of one of the kindergartens in the area as an activity-centre for children in the afternoons. Approval of this proposal was delayed; although eventually approved in the spring of 1982, the resignation of the local Project Renewal director meant that implementation of the plan was delayed indefinitely.

Our main objectives for the 1981-1982 activity year were:

1. to find effective ways of expanding and deepening community involvement in the neighbourhood centre programme and of encouraging participants in the programme to assume increasing responsibility for planning and running activities;
2. to institutionalize programme contents, by developing more clearly defined and structured activity programmes consistent with the underlying philosophy and aims of the project;
3. to wean the para-professional staff of the centres from their dependence on professional guidance, making them ultimately fully responsible for all aspects of the neighbourhood -centre based programme.

This demanded increased professionalization on their part, which in turn called for clearer role definition, differentiation and specialization. Aviva Kribus, who had supervised and directed both adult and children's programmes in the previous year, left the project; Sasona Barzilai, an experienced kibbutz kindergarten teacher, assumed responsibility for training and guiding the counsellors in charge of the afternoon children's programmes. Lili Degan, who had completed post-graduate studies in family counselling, took over supervision of the morning activities with mothers and toddlers.

The para-professional counsellors, with one exception, worked either in the morning or the afternoon programme, and met weekly for in-service-training sessions as separate teams with their supervisor-trainers. The key policy decision taken at the beginning of the 1981-1982 activity year was that all of the programmes would be run by the para-professional staff; whereas they would be assured of maximum support, guidance and training, they, rather than the professionals, would be the ones working directly with the client population. This policy paid off beyond our most optimistic expectations: once they overcame their initial fears and began to acquire self-confidence, they were able to give expression to their innate creativity, which, combined with increasing knowledge and skill acquired through the continuous training process, resulted in a number of innovative activity programmes.

At tri-monthly workshop sessions, the counsellors working in the various project programmes met together as neighbourhood teams, summarizing and evaluating their activities in the light of the specific problems of each neighbourhood and its population, insofar as these had come to light in the course of their work, and established guidelines for future activities. Each sub-group then reported back to the plenum, and the group as a whole discussed common problems and suggestions for how to deal with them. As a result, we were able to modify and change operational objectives and bring the neighbourhood-centre programme into closer alignment with the needs and desires of the client population. No less important, the para-professional staff became accustomed to the process of identifying needs and problems, defining objectives, and planning systematically. At the first of these sessions, held in October 1981, the following guidelines were established:

1. more emphasis should be placed on activities responding to the womens' own needs; a women is not only a mother, but an individual in her own right;
2. the centre should be a place where the women feel at ease, not just a place where they come to learn something;

3. wherever possible, the neighbourhood women should themselves run activities, and share their knowledge with others (ie., in cooking, handicrafts, etc.).

At the next session, in March, the neighbourhood centre teams were able to report on increasing social cohesion among the women coming to the centre, as a result of the changed emphasis: each centre had developed a multi-faceted programme of activities, providing for different interests and needs. Focus now shifted to new challenges:

1. the need to get away from the service image which tended to cling to the centres and to foster a sense of real belonging and responsibility among the women, a willingness to contribute - as well as receive.
2. The problem of sustainability: women would become enthusiastic about something, but after a short time this petered out, especially if the activity in which they were involved put demands on them. Similarly, many women were unaccustomed to planning ahead, and reluctant to commit themselves to regular attendence at a structured group activity.
3. The low frustration threshold of our client population: the young mothers, especially in the Remet and Eli Cohen neighbourhoods, tended to be self-indulgent and immature, and unwilling to devote effort to anything without an immediate pay-off - including investment of time and energy in learning to care for their children more effectively.

These group discussions also served to de-fuse some of the frustrations faced by the counsellors who put themselves on the line on a daily basis in their contract with the women in the neighbourhoods. Their role called for a great deal of ego-strength; every less-than-successful activity, every drop in participation, challenged their faith in their own ability. Almost without exception, they faced this challenge with surprising maturity.

The Morning Activity Programme for Mothers and Toddlers 1981-1982

The Eli Cohen Neighbourhood Centre

The year's activities began with a mothers' meeting, attended by 10 women to discuss and plan the programme. It was decided to run a mothers' and toddlers' group, a discussion group on educational problems, a sewing group and a toy-making group. The latter two activities were to be run by mothers from the neighbourhood. The toy-making group met for 2 sessions only; the sewing group for four. The mothers in both instances had no prior experience working with groups, and both they and the women attending became discouraged, with the result that the activities were discontinued.

The discussion group met regularly and discussed various problems of behaviour management; the mothers' and toddlers group also met on a weekly basis. However, attendance at both activities was sparse, and by the end of December, the centre staff concluded that a re-assessment was called for. Objectively, the number of young mothers who were not going out to work had decreased radically; many of the women who had been active in the past had either moved out of the neighbourhood (which had become a transit area) or were now working. Nonetheless, it was felt that somewhere the fault lay with us. A meeting was held with the complete staff of Eli Cohen and two major ideas emerged which governed the programme for the rest of the year.

1. The women want to do things for themselves and not only for their children.
2. The women want to enjoy themselves and are not interested in coming only for "educational" activities.

We decided to discontinue the previous activities and initiate activities more in line with the women's interests. Accordingly, in January, a cooking group and a reading group began to meet. The house mother brought the initial recipes by herself, afterwards various women from the community brought their recipes. The cooking group was an almost immediate success and began to attract groups of 8-15 women.

The reading group attracted smaller numbers but the same group of women met each week. The women read a women's magazine with human interest stories, and afterwards a discussion would ensue. These activities continued until the end of the year.

Eli Cohen also sponsored some speakers from the community on an open house basis. A social worker, psychologist and health educator were among some of the guest speakers. The guests usually attracted a fair sized group, larger than the regular attendance.

During the 4-week period between the Purim and Passover festivals, it is almost impossible to conduct regular activities, since all the house-wives are completely taken up with spring cleaning and preparations for the holiday. We proposed organizing a play group which would meet every morning, with each mother participating in the running of the group. The obvious advantage of having their mornings free attracted the mothers, and in March, the play group was organized. The mothers brought their 1-2½ year old toddlers to the centre and worked there themselves on a rotation basis. After the holidays the mothers decided to continue the play group on a twice-weekly basis.

The play group was successful in several ways. The mothers would usually visit for a while in the centre before they left their children, and attended the bi-weekly evening meeting for organizational purposes. They undertook responsibility for buying food and collecting money from the mothers. The mothers noted the improvement in their children's language development and social behaviour. Nine mothers and eleven children participated in the programme.

Achievements

1. Although the programme did not operate on a regular daily basis all year, a creative process took place in which the needs of the community were assessed and the programming was adjusted to those needs.
2. The play group was instrumental in involving a core group of mothers in assumption of responsibility for organizational measures.

3. An evening discussion group was initiated and was successful in attracting a group of women who attended regularly.

Objectives for the coming year

1. Staff - to implement a co-worker philosophy in which both counsellors direct the programme together, rather than one house mother and one helper.
2. To implement a new community survey and needs - assessment in order to determine the degree to which the young population of Eli Cohen has moved out and made room for middle-aged occupants. The centre can serve the needs of older women as well.
3. To develop a structured programme for toddlers coming to the centre.
4. To reach a wider range of mothers - those who live closest to the centre appear to utilize the centre the most.

The Ben-Gurion Neighbourhood Centre

Whereas the Eli Cohen neighbourhood had undergone demographic changes which negatively affected the functioning of the neighbourhood centre (out-migration of young couples, transients, and a high proportion of middle-aged and aged residents) the reverse process was taking place in the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood. Many young couples had recently moved into the new housing developments and condominium flats in the neighbourhood. The young women of the neighbourhood were upwardly mobile, more highly motivated towards self-improvement, and more aware of the needs of their children. Our main problem lay in the fact that the neighbourhood centre is located at the outskirts of the neighbourhood, thus making it more difficult for mothers of small children to reach the centre, as well as posing a challenge to the centre staff in their outreach work. We thus assigned a part-time worker to the task of community outreach. In addition to the young mothers from the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood, the centre also attracted a number of older women from the Giborah Yisrael area which bordered on the centre in the other direction.

The women who had participated in the weekly course on "You and Your Child" during the previous year formed the core-group for this year's activities; as a result of on-going community work, more and more women were attracted to activities at the centre. The team of counsellors responsible for morning activities, Mazal and Margo, were both especially talented and complemented each other: Mazal developed excellent rapport with the mothers; since she was slightly older than most of the women frequenting the centre, she was regarded as a more experienced mother, and often approached for advice on personal and family problems. By nature both sensitive and democratic, she was especially successful in leading group discussions. Margo, who had previously worked in the EMRA programme, had experience of working with young children, and was also excellent in handicrafts. In addition, she is very creative and innovative, and a natural pedagogue, despite her limited (8 yrs.) formal education. Margo not only organized the mothers and toddlers group and the toy-making groups which met regularly throughout the year; she also planned the curriculum content of these activities and evolved an effective methodology. Margo's ebullience and Mazal's supportive warmth lent a special quality to activities in the Ben Gurion Centre, and neighbourhood women frequently dropped in, even if not participating in the mornings activities.

A regular activity programme, established at the beginning of the year, continued without mishap. This was the only centre in which the discussion group continued with regular attendence throughout the year, thus illustrating the house-mother's real capacity for maintaining interest in an activity offering less immediate feedback or reward. In fairness to the staffs of the other centres, it should however be pointed out once more that the client population in this neighbourhood was undoubtedly more highly motivated - or perhaps, more middle-class - than that in the other neighbourhoods.

Activities took place 4 mornings weekly. These activities consisted of:

1. A discussion group, which began with discussions of behaviour management, moved on to the broader area of child-parent relations (using Dryker's "Children the Challenge" as a text) and from these to family relations;

2. A cooking and baking group, led by a mother from the neighbourhood with training in the field;
3. A mothers' and toddlers' group;
4. A toy-making group.

The latter activity was the only one for which women were required to register in advance; after 10 sessions, a new group was organized (this activity was much in demand). All other activities operated on an 'open house' principle.

Cooking seemed to be the most popular activity and 8-12 mothers usually participated. The discussion group was frequented by 5-10 women who kept returning, although they were not present for all of the sessions. About 5-10 women also took part in the toy-making group and in the mothers' and toddlers' group.

A representative committee of the mothers was invited to meet with the staff of the centre in March in order to determine if the centre was meeting the needs of the community. There were two meetings, one in the morning for mothers who were active in the centre, and one in the evening for mothers who worked. One of the results of these meetings was to organize an afternoon activity for women who worked during the day.

The afternoon activity was toy-making and it was offered one afternoon a week for three weeks. The activity was stopped because the mothers who attended were the same women who participated in the mornings, and it was therefore evident that the community of working mothers was not reached. Despite repeated attempts, we have sofar been unsuccessful in organizing sustained evening activities. It would seem that working mothers simply lack the time and energy to participate regularly in an activity outside the home. An additional problem in the evenings is that of baby-sitters; fathers are not usually cooperative, and many men work in jobs that keep them away from home in the evenings (policemen, army men, etc.).

Achievements

The morning programme established itself on a regular daily basis. The mothers in the neighbourhood frequently dropped in, even if they were not participating in the activity for the morning.

The staff worked very well together and with the mothers and children. They modelled alternative and positive behaviours for others to view.

Objectives - 1982-1983

1. To organize a programme for the toddlers coming to the centre. There are children who are at the centre 2-3 times a week with their mothers and become bored and therefore have behaviour problems. The shelter in the building has been organized as a play area for the children and a day-to-day programme will be planned.
2. To involve the mothers more in the actual responsibility for running the centre. One way we plan to do this is through a lending library of childrens' books and tapes. This is planned for the coming year and the mothers are supposed to organize it.
3. To reach a wider range of women in the community. The out-reach work will take place three to four times a year in intensive fashion to reach new women in the community, and will be carried out by all the centre staff, rather than by a special community worker.
4. To organize a support group in which women will be able to give expression to the difficulties they encounter in their roles as mothers, wives, and individuals.

The Remet Neighbourhood Centre

The centre opened in September 1981, in a small neighbourhood flat. Although Project Renewal had officially approved the plan for the new centre, and assumed financial responsibility for equipment, salaries and operating expenses, no funds were made available until January 1982 (most of the promised furniture and equipment was finally obtained during the summer of 1982).

As soon as the flat became available, our own project decided to begin operations, with a minimal investment of resources.

Furnishings and equipment consisted of what could be spared from the other centres; our investment in salaries and other expenses were eventually paid back almost a year later, in October 1982. Available was a minimum amount of books and toys, and a minimal amount of kitchen equipment. In spite of these drawbacks women started to come almost immediately. Remet is situated in a U-shaped block of apartments and the mothers in the neighbourhood came very quickly to see what activities were being offered.

The first activity, which began in October, was a discussion group on discipline problems with children. 10-12 mothers with their infants attended the group discussions which were led by the house-mother. A second worker attended the sessions to be with the children during the course of activities. By December, a sewing group and a toy-making group had begun.

The pattern for all of the groups was similar. The mothers enjoyed the first few sessions, eventually became disinterested, and the attendance decreased. There were several possible explanations for this pattern:

1. The women themselves had never been involved in any long-term activities which required commitment. At the first sign of disappointment, or lack of general participation, they stopped coming.
2. There was a gap between what they said they wanted to do and the activities which were going on at the centre.
3. They didn't identify themselves with the centre, and if the activity did not please them, then they stopped coming. The role of the centre was to provide them with services.

In March, the play-group was launched, and that succeeded, more than any other activity, in involving the mothers and helping them to feel that the centre was a vital part of the community.

The play group was a cooperative enterprise and the mothers were involved in collecting money, buying food, and working in the play group on a rota system. The play group operated three days a week.

The mothers who were involved in the play group came to other activities as well. A handicrafts morning was instituted, and women worked on different crafts.

Achievements

1. The centre was established as an integral part of the neighbourhood. When the house-mother came to organize activities at the end of August 1982, the mothers in the neighbourhood wanted to know when activities were opening again.
2. There were several evening meetings which were organized for the purpose of locating premises for childrens' activities in the afternoon. The centre was seen as a place where action could be generated. The mothers submitted a petition to the steering committee of Project Renewal.
3. The play group was successful in organizing the mothers into a self-sufficient group.

Objectives for the coming year

1. To allow and encourage the mothers to become even more self-sufficient in running the play group; perhaps to allow them to run the programme one morning a week on their own.
2. To engage in systematic community out-reach work, in order to reach a wider periphery of women.
3. To structure an appropriate activity programme for the toddlers coming to the centre.

As already mentioned, the Remet Neighbourhood Centre was sponsored by Project Renewal; since financing came from government sources, they had to be channeled through statutory agencies. The centre thus came under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare, with the local Department of Welfare officially responsible. This was our first direct experience with government bureaucracy, and its hampering (and dampening) effects, and led us to appreciate the degrees of freedom and flexibility which we enjoyed as an independent project in our other enterprises.

The afternoon activity programme for children

Afternoon activities at the Eli Cohen and Ben-Gurion neighbourhood centres continued in 1981-1982 along the lines established during the prior year. Sasona Barzilai, who assumed responsibility for the training and guiding of the work of the centres' para-professional staff, is a graduate of the Oranim Kibbutz Teachers' Training Seminary and brought to her task many years of experience as a kindergarten teacher. Under her supervision, the children's afternoon activity programme became more clearly defined, both conceptually and operationally.

The children's programme in the neighbourhood centres is based on the principle of free-flowing, self-initiated and self-directed activity, with a wide variety of activities available from which the child is able to chose. Central to this approach is the belief that if the child is permitted to chose what he wants to do, and for how long, he learns to be responsible for his own decisions and choices. Non-directive, self-initiated activity enables the child to learn through experimentation and discovery. The counsellor's role is to encourage the child to solve problems independently, to the best of his abilities, in his own way. Her involvement with the child takes the form of support and interest in what he is doing, through sympathetic observation or questions; she avoids interference in the child's activity, and does not tell him what to do or how to do it.

In this way he learns to depend on himself, to become aware of his own skills and limitations and to overcome difficulties by himself. Since the child is under no pressure to compete with others, or to achieve , and free to spend as much time as he wants at a given task, he learns not to be discouraged if he does not succeed in doing something at first. The activity itself, the process, is valued - not the product or outcome. Children enjoy coming to the centre because they are free to express themselves in their own way - because it is fun. A child may come as often as he likes; during the hours the centre is open, he may come and go as he choses. Freedom does not however imply anarchy; the centre is governed by well -defined rules of behaviour which are known to all the children, and which they are expected to observe. On the whole, they quickly adapt themselves to both freedom and its boundaries. Freedom also carries with it responsibilities; the children share in the tasks of keeping the centre clean and orderly, and at the end of each afternoon's activities, the counsellors and the children put away equipment and clean up after themselves.

Careful planning and organization underly the unstructured environment; th is nothing haphazard about the arrangement of the 15 odd activity areas. All equipment has been carefully chosen; the counsellors are instructed in the rationale of each activity and the educational principles underlying it, and have themselves tried out all the activities, from finger-painting and block-building to playing didactic games and reading the childrens' books. The children's activities are monitored and recorded by the counsellors, and their daily records, together with the supervisors periodic observations, form the basic for the weekly in-service training session.

The atmosphere in the centres and their mode of operation is very different from that which prevails in the kindergartens and the schools, and poses the dilemma of conflicting demands and expectations (though kindergarten teachers are aware of our educational approach, they themselves find difficulty implementing it). The children seem able to resolve the dilemma without difficulty, accepting the fact that different sets of rules prevail in different settings - in itself perhaps an important lesson to learn.

The Eli Cohen Neighbourhood Centre

Some 30-40 children participated daily in activities at the centre. In response to the demand (and the needs) of the centre's "graduates" - children who had come to the centre in the past, and now, as 3rd and 4th graders, were "over-age", we set aside a special day for older children, and provided them with activities suitable for them, such as carpentry, didactic games, and books.

The most striking feature of the Eli Cohen centre was its warm and happy atmosphere. Though usually crowded and humming with activity, there was rarely any conflict among the children; children played together and often on their own initiative organized complex and elaborate activities, such as improvised plays, birthday parties,etc.Despite the fact that many of the children came from problem homes, and normally had little respect for public property, they cared for the equipment in the centre, (which they regarded as their second home) and we had no incidents of theft or vandalism, common occurances in the schools and kindergartens.

The demographic changes in the neighbourhood made themselves feel in the afternoon activities as well as in the morning programme. The fact that many more of the women were going out to work meant that fewer mothers came in the afternoons. Nonetheless, the MASLUL programme for parents and children continued, with an average of 7 mothers and their children attending.

The Ben Gurion Neighbourhood Centre

The Ben Gurion neighbourhood centre is situated in an igloo-shaped building which originally housed two kindergarten classes until it was found to be unsuitable for this purpose. Today, one half of the building functions as resource centre and meeting place for mothers and toddlers in the mornings and kindergarten teachers in the afternoons; the other half serves as activity centre for children.

As a result of the rapid growth of the new Ben Gurion neighbourhood, the municipality was faced with a lack of facilities for kindergartens in the area, and in July 1981 we were informed that we would have to vacate the building, which would revert to its original purpose. Intensive lobbying and negotiation on our part resulted in the acceptance of our compromise proposal: that the half of the building used by us for childrens' activities indeed be utilized as a kindergarten facility - on the condition that we would continue to operate it as a neighbourhood activity centre for the children in the afternoons. We offered to put all our equipment at the disposal of the kindergarten - and to supervise the activities of the kindergarten teacher, with the intent of turning the kindergarten into a model facility. Despite initial difficulties, the afternoon team of the project's para-professional counsellors and the morning team of kindergarten teacher and assistant eventually established a modus vivendi. Our plan to develop a model kindergarten did not bear fruit. After the first three months, the experienced kindergarten teacher in charge went on maternity leave, and for the rest of the year the kindergarten was run by a series of substitutes, thus making any systematic guidance futile and cooperation difficult.

A number of other factors contributed to making the activity year at the Ben-Gurion centre less than successful. The fact that the centre functioned as a kindergarten in the morning created some confusion in the minds of people, and rumours spread in the neighbourhood that there no longer was an afternoon programme.

The counsellor assigned to community out-reach in the neighbourhood was not very effective at her task. The three counsellors working at the centre (two of them originally trained as kindergarten teachers) did not succeed in establishing a friendly and inviting atmosphere, and tended to be cold and authoritarian in their dealings with the children.

A number of children from the Giborei Yisrael neighbourhood bordering on the centre who came from very difficult home environments were a disruptive influence, and helped to give the centre a negative image, with the result that many parents from the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood ceased sending their children to the centre. At the end of the year, two of the counsellors left of their own accord, and the third (who was also the community worker) was fired. At the beginning of the 1982 activity year a new team of counsellors took over, intensive community outreach brought results, and an average of some 40 children now attend activities regularly; the atmosphere has improved remarkably, and in a short period of time the centre has once more become a successful operation.

3. The Parent - Education Programme and Play - Corners in Clinic

Waiting-Rooms

During 1980-1981, a concerted effort was made to align the programme in the clinic waiting-rooms more closely with its stated objective of parent-education, and to train the para-professional staff to function more effectively in their parent-counselling role. Increased emphasis was placed on developing those resources aimed at parents: reading materials, displays and repertoire of parent-child activities, and on enhancing the counsellors' skills in utilizing them effectively to stimulate the parents' interest. The latter effort was only partially successful, and we were forced to reach the painful decision to terminate the employment of two of the four counsellors staffing the clinic play and guidance corners and to temporarily shut down operations in the "B" clinic until replacements were available - that is, after the completion of the yearly training course for para-professional counsellors. In defining our objectives for the coming year, we emphasized:

1. furthering the independent functioning of the counsellors;
2. increasing the variety of educational resources and facilities available to parents;
3. giving priority to parent-counselling, whenever possible on an on-going basis;
4. striving to affect parents' attitudes and behaviour in regard to a number of important issues such as toilet-training, punishment, feeding, etc.

The play and guidance corners in the Kupat Cholim "A" clinic and the "A" Well-Bably Clinic continued under the direction of the two counsellors who had worked there during the previous year, and who had adapted successfully to the new demands placed on them; the "B" clinic play and guidance corner, now sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Health and Welfare Services in the Negev, reopened at the end of October.

The new counsellor in the "B" clinic was not only a graduate of the project's training course but had also previously completed two years of training as a nurse. Her role was especially challenging, since she replaced two counsellors who had each run a separate Play-corner in the "B" clinic,where sick children and children waiting for check-ups at the Well-Baby clinic congregated with their parents in two separate sections of the clinic. Shula, the new counsellor, split her time between the two areas, according to which was more populated at a given time. A number of new features were introduced. Each play-corner displayed a variety of developmental-stage orientated educational toys; parents were able to make any of these toys while waiting, under the counsellors' instruction, paying only for the cost of the materials (all of which were available in the play-corner). The counsellor utilized these toy-making sessions to discuss the purpose of each toy, the importance of play in the child's development, and any other issue which the parents raised. We expanded the library of books on parenting, child-development, pregnancy and related issues. In response to repeated requests to borrow the books to read at home, we began lending books for a 1-2 week period. Despite the fact that we demanded no deposit, there were no incidents of books borrowed and not returned. A variety of leaflets and handouts were also made available: in addition to our own materials, we received a variety of health-education pamphlets from Kupat Holim for distribution, each devoted to a different topic: diarrhea, excessive exposure to sun, accident prevention in the home, etc. At regular intervals, the medical staff of the clinic and the Kupat Holim health educator who visited Ofakim once a week, lectured to all of the project staff on various preventive health topics. We also began to pay more attention to the needs of the older children who came to the clinics, and began to provide suitable games and activities for them.

These intensive efforts to stimulate parent interest and involvement in a variety of ways: by offering toys suited to the child and encouraging the parents to play with their children while waiting, by passing around reading materials, offering instructions in toy-making, and being ever-ready to listen to problems and to help if possible, began to produce tangible results.

Parents began to perceive the counsellors as resource-people to whom they could turn for advice and guidance with the problems they encountered in raising their children: discipline, bed-wetting, fears, sibling - rivalry , and a variety of developmental problems. Often they would turn to the counsellors for advice on more intimate matters such as birth-control and husband-wife relations. On occasion, women came to the clinic especially to talk to the counsellor; in many cases they found it easier to discuss a family problem with the para-professional counsellor than with the professional clinic staff. When necessary, the counsellors acted as go-between, referring the women to the relevant professionals for help. In other instances, they would suggest appropriate reading-material.

In most cases, their own training, knowledge and common-sense sufficed, with the empathy they were able to establish playing a crucial role. From time to time, the nurses and doctors referred parents to the counsellor for guidance.

The play-and guidance corners in the clinics also served as a show-window for the project as a whole: the counsellors in the clinics described the project's other programmes to the parents, encouraged them to become involved in activities in the neighbourhood centres and referred new mothers to the EMRA programme.

Each counsellor kept a daily log in which the day's events were recorded: what topics were discussed and with whom, what activities took place, what were the conditions prevailing, and so forth.

The weekly sessions with the programme's supervisor were usually devoted to various issues that arose in the course of work, while in-service training sessions centered primarily on further enrichment of the counsellors' repertoire of activities, familiarization with the literature which they were encouraging parents to read, and on specific topics of health and education.

In view of the sporadic nature of the contact established with parents and children in the clinic play and guidance corners, it is extremely difficult to evaluate this programme's impact. However, the very fact that all of the town's children and parents come into contact with the clinic a number of times during the year, serves to assure that our key message of the importance of parent's active concern and involvement with their children's development and education is reaching a maximum number of people. The clinic play and guidance corners played an important role in attracting potential participants to the projects' other programmes, as well as providing easily accessible guidance and advice on a variety of common problems facing parents. No less important, the play-corners have served to improve the quality of life in the community by reducing some of the friction and tension attendent to waiting one's turn at the clinics.

Towards the end of the year, we were requested by the Association for the Advancement of Health and Welfare Services in the Negev to submit a proposal for expanding the programme to a number of other clinics in the Negev area. Although to date no final decision has been reached, we have grounds to believe that the model developed in Ofakim will be found suitable for dissemination to other communities.

4. The Centre for Teen-age Girls

Although plans for the opening of a centre in the Remet neighbourhood serving the needs of both young mothers and teen-aged girls were prepared in the summer of 1980, implementation was delayed until such a time as both suitable facilities and a source of funding became available. Both conditions were finally met in October 1981, when we were informed that the proposal which we, together with the Ofakim Social Welfare Department, had submitted to the steering committee of Project Renewal had been approved, and that the groundfloor flat which we had earmarked for this purpose was finally vacant. Since an additional period of four months elapsed before actual money was released, we opened the centre "on a shoe-string", furnishing it with whatever equipment we could temporarily spare from our other centres.

The difficulties we faced in establishing the new Remet neighbourhood centre have already been described in the previous section. This was our first experience in running a programme directly linked to a statutory authority - and also our first taste of the inhibiting influence of bureaucracy. Almost a year elapsed before the promised furniture and equipment were finally made available. The project was asked to provide temporary financing to cover operational expenses and the salary of the house-mother for the teen-age girls' centre; this outlay was only returned to us in the fall of 1982, and since it was not index-linked, meant a financial loss for us. We were however determined to begin operation as soon as possible. The programme for teen-age girls was initiated in October 1981, operating at first on a part-time basis, two afternoons weekly: one afternoon, the centre was utilized by the social worker assigned to "teen-age girls at risk" who ran a group-dynamics workshop in which a group of girls under her care participated; on the second afternoon, the centre operated on an open-house basis, opening its doors to any girl who wanted to participate in activities. Lily Degan, the project staffer responsible for supervising the teen-age girls' programme, assisted by a volunteer mother from the block, worked with the girls on handicrafts and conducted informal discussions.

In February a house-mother joined the staff, and the programme expanded to 5 afternoons weekly. The loosely-structured programme included discussions on topics chosen by the girls, holiday celebrations, cooking, and handicrafts. The house-mother's duties included community out-reach, and part of her time was devoted to establishing contact with girls unfamiliar with the centre.

A nucleus of 15-20 began to visit the centre on a regular basis. Usually a girl who liked coming to the centre began to bring her friends. The girls ranged in age from 13-16, and came from a variety of educational backgrounds. Some came from the local high-schools, both the secular and the religious; some from a combined work/study programme run by the youth authorities; others were drop-outs who neither studied or worked.

Despite the fact that the centre lacked facilities and was not especially attractive, the girls continued to come, bearing out our belief that a meeting place for teen-age girls was both necessary and important, as a positive alternative to remaining at home or "hanging-out" at the town centre. Most of these girls come from very traditional homes, where they are expected to play an active role in running the household and caring for the younger children, and where there is little awareness of their social and emotional needs. In their attempts to escape the constricting home environment, they become easy prey for anyone offering often simulated warmth, affection and excitement. With little guidance (and that usually in the form of prohibitions) from their parents, and little exposure to society at large, many of them only too easily got into trouble. Despite the reluctance of the community to admit the existance of the problem, there is a fairly high incidence of teen-age pregnancies and sexual delinquency in the town. The main objective of the centre is to bring the girls in contact with other girls their age, and with understanding and trained adults, in the hope that:

1. they would find in the centre a home away from home where they would be able to feel comfortable and be themselves;

2. the centre would provide a forum where the many questions troubling adolescents could be discussed and answered in a honest and straightforward way;

3. the centre would be able to teach and inculcate life-skills, from how to plan a meal and buy and select groceries to how to behave in various social situations.

An unpredicted problem was the tendency of teen-agers to form cliques and in-groups: as younger girls began to come to the centre, some of the older ones felt ill-at-ease; similarly the girls attending high-school tended to snob the working girls and the drop-outs. In planning the programme for the following year, there were factors that had to be taken into consideration, and we looked for ways in which we would be able both to meet the needs and expectations of each group while continuing to operate the centre as a place where any girl was welcome.

5. The Early Childhood Resource Centre

The Early Childhood Resource Centre opened in December 1980, rapidly developed into a facility which answered the needs of the kindergarten teachers, enhanced our effectiveness in promoting parent-involvement, and provided the means for improving both the content and the methodology of early childhood education in the town and its environs. Its almost immediate success assured us of the legitimation by the Ministry of Education's supervisors. The fact that parent involvement had now become an official tenet of Ministry of Education policy paved the road to active cooperation with the kindergarten supervisors in planning the Resource Centres' programme for the 1981-1982 school year. In addition to the Ofakim kindergarten teachers,the teachers from the adjacent Merchavim Regional Council (where we had initiated our satellite project) began to utilize the centre. This resulted from the fact that the kindergarten supervisors in charge of Ofakim were also responsible for supervision of the Merchavim region's teachers, and the two groups joined together for in-service training sessions.

During 1981-1982, the Early Childhood Resource Centre became the meeting-place for all the kindergarten teachers in the area. All training sessions were held in the centre; in addition, at the Resource Centre they were able to meet their colleagues informally, receive pedagogical advice, prepare teaching aids and didactic games, and get assistance in planning activities with parents.

A wide range of educational resources were available at the centre:

1. Samples of some 50 home-made didactic games for ages 2-7, with materials, facilities and instructions for their construction available at the centre. The games were catalogued and coded according to content and purpose: development of mathematical concepts, matching, sensory development, reading readiness, etc. Kindergarten teachers made games for use in the kindergarten or as samples for workshops with parents, paying for the cost of materials only. Throughout the year, 9 groups of parents participated in workshops at the centre, together with their child's teacher; other teachers organized workshops with parents in their kindergarten. Some of the games were translated from foreign source-books; some were adapted from commercial games; yet others were developed by the resource-centre's staff. Some 27 kindergarten teachers made use of this facility. Stage-oriented toys for the 0-3 age-range were also on display at the centre.
2. Lending library of books on education, psychology, and various topics related to the kindergarten curriculum. Disappointingly, few of the kindergarten teachers took advantage of this facility. On the other hand they made good use of various sources providing practical guidelines for their work. For example, most of the kindergarten teachers bought (at their own expense) an anthology of stories, games, songs, etc. for holiday celebrations in the kindergarten, published by the Education Department of the Federated Kibbutz Movements, which was displayed at the centre.

3. Audio-visual aids: slides and video-tapes on various topics, such as the organization of a junk-play ground, rhyming games, building blocks etc. Especially popular was the Open University's parent-education programme "The Pre-School Child" which we recorded on video-tape. We adapted some of the material in the accompanying booklet for group discussion and organized a workshop for kindergarten teachers in the utilization of the materials with parents groups. 14 kindergarten teachers utilized the centre's facilities for discussion-groups with parents on this material. In May, the Centre was broken into and the video-tape recorder stolen, thus bringing this promising activity to a temporary stop.

4. Model displays on various subjects forming part of the kindergarten curriculum such as holidays, the seasons of the year, reading readiness, etc. One corner of the centre was given over to this purpose. The corner was prepared by an experienced local kindergarten teacher who supervised and guided the work of the less experienced teachers, and was intended to serve as a model for similar displays which the teachers were expected to prepare in their own kindergartens.

5. Mimeographed activity pages. The kindergarten teachers had been in the habit of preparing their own work-pages for use in the kindergarten, or for the children to take home and work on with their parents; in the past we had assisted them in mimeographing this material. Often these pages were poorly conceived and poorly executed. We prepared a wide selection of activity and work-pages, carefully selected from a variety of sources, and classified according to the type of activity or skill they were meant to reinforce. In return for an equivilant quantity of blank paper, the teachers received as many copies of whatever pages they selected for use in their classes. Some 22 kindergarten teachers utilized this facility.

6. Catalogue of activities and games especially devoted to reading and numeracy readiness, for pre-school classes

Both the secular and the religious sector utilized the centre's facilities for bi-weekly in-service training sessions; the kindergarten supervisors and inspectors also used the centre for meetings with individual teachers or groups of teachers. Sasona Barzilai, the centre's director, was asked to run a series of special workshops within the framework of the in-service training programme. The topics covered in these workshops included activity corners in the kindergarten, the development of children's art, organization of junk play-ground, reading-readiness, etc. These workshops permitted us to introduce the kindergarten teachers to the child-centered, non-directive and activity - based pedagogical approach taught at the Oranim Teacher's Training Seminary - which is quite different from the training that most of the kindergarten teachers had received.

During this year, we made a concerted effort to involve local personnel in the running of the centre. Shula Ganz, the local teacher-trainer mentioned previously, worked at the centre one day a week and also served as liason with the kindergarten teachers; in addition, Hana Buzaglo, one of the project's para-professional staffers, by training a crafts teacher, worked on a half-time basis at the centre. The salaries of both were paid by the Educational Betterment Project of the Ministry of Education. Sasona Barzilai worked half-time as centre director, without salary, seconded to this task by the Federetion of Kibbutz Movements. This meant that we were able to operate the centre at minimal cost.

During this year, we continued the library project which we had initiated two years earlier. Every kindergarten participating raised funds from the parents to buy some 15-20 books which were matched by another 20 books supplied by the project and served as a mini-lending-library utilized by the children in the kindergarten, who exchanged books (which they took home) weekly. Some 17 kindergartens participated in this activity during 1981-1982.

At the end of the school-year, we began to prepare a new addition to the resources provided by the centre - a lending-library of mounted reproductions of paintings to be displayed in the kindergartens. In preparation for the introduction of this new element of aesthetic education into the kindergartens, the teachers were taken on a guided tour of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. For many of them, this was a first-time experience.

The Early Childhood Resource Centre is unique, and in our opinion, a model well-worth copying. Though there are many pedagogical centres throughout the country, these usually serve the needs of the primary schools and the high-schools, with but minor attention paid to the needs of the kindergartens. However, since Israeli kindergartens are not linked to primary schools, kindergarten teachers usually work in isolation from each other, with the kindergarten inspector alone acting as a link between them; each kindergarten teacher fends for herself as best she can in preparing her own teaching aids, etc. As we have described, the Ofakim Early Childhood Resource Centre not only made a wide selection of resource materials conveniently available to these teachers and served as an effective catalyst for the development of more effective modes of parent-teacher interaction, but also helped to mitigate the professional isolation of the kindergarten teachers.

As the centre's reputation grew, special education teachers and 1st and 2nd grade teachers from the primary schools also began to utilize the available facilities.

6. Staff Training

The training course

10 women from Ofakim and 9 women from the moshavim in the Merchavim area, where the new satellite project was scheduled to begin functioning, attended the yearly training-course for para-professional counsellors. Selection of candidates followed the procedures which had been established in the past and proved to be effective (these are described in the first section of this report, devoted to activities in 1980-1981).

The course itself, which began on August 30, was shortened to 4 weeks, or 80 hours. This enabled us to complete the course of study before the High Holidays (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) and permitted the new counsellors to begin working immediately after the holidays, thus assuring that the project activity year begin without delay resulting from lack of staff. A series of workshops devoted to special topics not covered in the basic course were planned for the week of the Succoth holiday in October. These workshops, attended by the graduates of the course joining the project as counsellors and by the veteran counsellors (for whom they served as a refresher course) served the additional function of integrating the novice and experienced counsellors into one team.

Course Curriculum

	Number of hours
Orientation and introduction	2
Interpersonal communication, group dynamics and community work	16
The family	10
Early childhood: development and developmental stages	18
Behaviour management and problems of child-raising	6
The child's ecology: organizing the child's environment, nutrition, illnesses, etc.	6
Observation and recording	12
Play and its role in development	2
Toys and games	4
The community and its development	2
Summary discussion	2
	80

This, our 4th training-course, was considerably shorter than the 1st course we ran in 1978. We had come to realize that certain topics were more effectively dealt with after the counsellors were already at work. At best, a course of this duration could serve as no more than an introduction, creating awareness and setting forth basic principles, and we had thus come to place increasing emphasis on the on-going in-service training.

Two important factors distinguished this course from prior ones:

1. with the exception of one area, that of inter-personal communications and group dynamics,all of the course was taught by the project's professional staff;
2. we raised our expectations and demands from the course participants considerably.

Reading assignments and written excercises formed an integral part of course work, and self-expression (both verbal and written) was emphasized; thus participants were asked to summarize material and present it to the group, etc.

Topics were presented in problem-orientated rather than strictly informative fashion, thus fostering group discussion.

In the context of the project's aim that the para-professional counsellor should serve as a role-model and leader for other women in the community, the evaluations of the course-participants in the summary discussion are particularly interesting. Although expressing uncertainty about the degree to which they felt prepared to guide other women, and aware of the fact that much of what they had learnt was rudimentary, they stressed the following:

1. the course had made them aware of may things which they had not thought about before or which they had been unfamiliar with.
2. The course had contributed a great deal to their personal development, their self-understanding, their relations with husbands and children. Many of the women spoke of how they had shared their newly-acquired knowledge with their husbands.

3. They had begun to apply what they learnt in their own role as parents, and were able to report on changes in their childrens' behaviour and their own behaviour in relation to their children.

4. They felt they had a much greater awareness of the child's needs and a better understanding of how to meet these needs.

5. The course had given them self-confidence: some of them had been unsure of their ability to return to the world of the classrooom and the demands of study, but they had managed to overcome their insecurity, and felt that now they would be able to begin a new chapter in their lives.

6. The group-dynamics sessions had made them more sensitive to others, and more aware of how other people responded to them.

7. Unanimously, they expressed the need and desire to learn more.

In-service training

As mentioned earlier on, one of our central aims during 1981-1982was to reduce the project's dependency on professional staff and other people from outside the community, while shifting increasing responsibility for all aspects of project operations onto the shoulders of the indigenous staff of counsellors. This called for increasing professionalization of the latter. In-service training was re-structured to serve this purpose and institutionalized.Each sub-project team met for a two-hour weekly training session, where topics specific to their programme were discussed. Once a month, all of the project team met together for lectures and discussion on topics of common interest, such as family planning, nutrition, mental health, etc.

We believe the emphasis placed on on -going training to be one of the main factors responsible for the increasingly effective performance of the project staff. We would however be doing less than justice to the project and its staff if we gave the impression that task-effectiveness were our only aim. No less important was the personal growth and development of the project's counsellors which was enhanced by this process - sometimes quite dramatically.

C. Project Organization

Throughout the 1981-1982 activity year, we continued our efforts to develop an organizational structure fostering increasing community involvement and responsibility for all aspects of project operation.

1. The Association for Education and Community

This body, consisting of representatives of the Ofakim Local Council, The Ofakim Community Centre Association, and the Institute for Education and Community Development was established in April 1981. The executive committee of the Association met regularly throughout the year, and became directly responsible for policy decisions and all administrative affairs. The operational budget of the Ofakim project was transferred to the Association's bank account in monthly installments; all project staffers became employees of the Association (in the past, some had been employed by the Institute for Education and Community Development, others by the Ofakim Local Council). Operationally, Project Education and Community Development in Ofakim is now under complete control of this representative local organization and contributed to the counsellors' identification with the project as a whole and its aims. Involvement of all the team in regular planning and evaluation sessions led to a hightened awareness of the importance of aligning activities with objectives. Last, but not least, was the group cohesion generated by these meetings. After the transfer of all project staffers to the employment of the Association for Education and Community, an employees' committee was elected to represent their interests. The members of the committee became officially affiliated with the local Labour Council of the Histadrut (Federation of Labour)and regularly attended the study days and seminars organized by this body.

The neighbourhood participants

Some progress was made in the direction of sharing responsibility for project functioning with the participants in activities at the neighbourhood centres, particularly in the form of the mothers' groups involved in the play-groups at the Eli Cohen and Remet centres.

The project staff

Whereas in the early years, operational planning and on-going evaluation of project implementation had been primarily the concern of the professional staff, these functions were now the responsibility of the entire staff, with professionals and para-professionals meeting together regularly for this purpose, both at the level of the teams responsible for each sub-project, or of the entire staff. Increasing involvement in these aspects of project operations not only deepened the commitment of the indigenous staff to the project, but enriched all our activities in many ways. Not only did the ind genous staff bring to these sessions their understanding of and rapport with the community; these meetings provided new scope for their innate creativity and imagination, which now blossomed. Tri-monthly meetings of all the project staff, at which each team reported on and discussed programme implementation, achievements and problems, facilitated coordination and integration of programmes. Some partial success was achieved in involving mothers in the actual running of activity groups. As we mentioned earlier on in this report, this level of community involvement proved to be particularly difficult, and remains a major challenge.

D. Coordination and Cooperation

The new neighbourhood centre in the Remet area, financed by Project Renewal and officially under the auspices of the Department of Social Welfare, introduced a new phase of active cooperation with the statutory authorities in a joint endeavour. Though this intimate involvement with the bureaucratic structure was often frustrating and difficult, we welcomed it, in the awareness that ultimately all of the project's activities would have to become institutionalized in this fashion in order to continue their existence.

Coordination with the Ministry of Education in regards to the Early Childhood Resource Centre continued to be fruitful. Similarly, we strenthened our ties with the health authorities and with Amigur, the Jewish Agency housing authority.

E. Evaluation

The evaluation plan for Phase II submitted in 1980 , forms the basis for the systematic project evaluation which has accompanied project activities since the beginning of the first year of Phase II. A comprehensive report dealing with the period from January to July 1981 was completed. On the basis of the findings of this report, some changes were introduced and evaluation instruments were refined. An evaluation report covering the period from September 1981 to July 1982 is now being completed. A formal agreement was concluded with the Humphrey Centre for Social Ecology, with the evaluation unit of the former directly responsible for project evaluation. The seminar on evaluation in which all the Bernard van Leer Foundation projects in Israel participated was helpful to all of the projects, and project evaluators are continuing to meet to exchange information and experience.

F. Dissemination

1. The Moshav Satellite Project

The three moshavim which had been chosen as sites for a satellite project: K'lachim, Pa'ameh Tashaz, and S'deh Zvi were considered to be particularly problematic, sharing a variety of social, economic and cultural problems; they were particularly lacking in social cohesion, and felt to be especially in need of assistance in developing integrating social frameworks.

It was decided to establish a parent-child activity centre in each of these moshavim, to be staffed by local women trained by the project. The centre's programme was planned as a three-track one. The first, activities for women during the morning hours. The second, afternoon activities for the 3-6 age group. This age group is in pre-school until 1 P.M. and there were no afternoon activities available. The third, activities for parents together with their children. Since we felt motivating parents to be the initial task, we intended to begin with open drop-in centres and not with structured, organised programmes, devoting the initial period firstly to the development of rapport and trust between the counsellors and the residents and secondly to whetting the appetite of the residents in order to raise their level of interest.

Although each moshav has a day-care centre and pre-school programme, there is little interaction between the school and the homes and a great need for professional intervention in order to:

a. raise the level of the educational environment of the pre-schools and day-care centres;

b. help develop mutual assistance and co-operation between the families and the staff.

First steps had been taken at the Early Childhood Resource Centre in Ofakim. The pre-school teachers of the moshavim were already participating in the in-service training programme together with the teachers in Ofakim. They had also begun to use the resource centre to enrich their own programmes and classrom activities.

In addition, we had decided to set up parent-guidance and play corners in the two Well-Baby clinics serving the Merchavim area.

The programme described above had been approved by the Merchavim Regional Council in August 1981, and a contract had been signed between the Regional Council and the Institute for Education and Community Development.

Work had begun on the sites chosen for the centres in each of the three target moshavim, and a group of 9 women had been selected for training as para-professional counsellors, at the yearly training course run by the Ofakim project. During September 1981, while the future counsellors were in training, the three parent-child centres were renovated, painted and equipped by the moshav members and the Regional Council.

The month of October was utilized to lay the groundwork for the opening of all the centres during the second week of November. Because we genuinely wanted each centre to reflect the needs and interests of the women and children in the moshav we devised a questionnaire to assess these needs. Each group of para-professionals visited every household (about 60 in each case) in the moshav in which they would be working to discuss the project and fill in the questionnaire together with the women. The results were interesting insofar as in each moshav they were different.

Klacnim has the largest number of families of childbearing age and therefore, the largest number of children ages 0-8. As a result, childrens' activities had to be planned for separate age-groups.

One of Klachim's main sources of income is hot-house flowers. The women work in them during the winter months and therefore requested more evening activities.

In Pa'ameh Tashaz few women are involved in agriculture, but a large number of them work outside the moshav, mostly employed by the regional council as secretaries, etc. An extended school day (until 3.30 P.M. instead of 1.00 P.M) has therefore been arranged for the children of these parents in the pre-school. These mothers requested late afternoon activities together with their children.

Sdeh Zvi has an older population, with few children under the age of three. The women and the few young families are generally apathetic towards activity for themselves and their children.

There are two or three young families who run the moshav. The men of these families are always the heads of the moshav council, and make no attempt to include other moshav members. Financially, Sdeh Zvi is the poorest moshav with the lowest self-esteem. A small group of delinquent youth, ages 20-24 had burned the pre-school and community hall, and the moshav members and the regional council were afraid to take a strong stand. The local youth worker had resigned in protest and left this moshav with no organized activities for the large school-age population. The women of Sdeh Zvi requested activities during daylight hours only. No one leaves her home after dark.

On the other hand, the three moshavim also had much in common. When they were asked what kinds of activities they would be interested in they all requested handicrafts i.e., sewing, knitting, embroidery, etc. When we suggested activities such as toy-making or utilization of scrap material it was rejected out of hand. Our research showed that there had been numerous attempts at organization of exactly the kinds of activities they requested. All such attempts had ended due to lack of interest. The staff decided that two steps were necessary to arouse and maintain interest in the centre. The first was to make the women feel that it was their centre. The centres were opened every morning for 2 weeks during which time moshav members were encouraged to prepare the centre for activities. Groups of both men and women began to arrive at Klachim and Pa'ameh Tashaz. Only one or two women arrived at Sdeh Zvi. The second step was to provide "something for everyone". The idea of an open house was conceived. Each group of para-professionals has its own skills and talents which we utilized. One sews, another knits, another makes stuffed animals. Women arrived, chose from a variety of activities and learnt from one another. All three moshavim responded to the idea. One long-term goal of the open house was to help the women see that they could help and teach one another. Initially, they were not willing to be taught any skill by a member of their own moshav. As time went by, the open house activities were constantly reviewed by both the staff and the women. Among the several suggestions that were proposed and followed-up were a library with books on child development, parenting, etc.; a magazine and newspaper corner; a recipe exchange corner and a special morning each month devoted to discussion rather than activity.

The children's activities began with several hours devoted to exploration of equipment. These children were used to being in a highly structured pre-school. Since we believe in open areas and self pacing, a lot of effort had to be spent in helping the children to develop a sense of responsibility toward the centre. The para-professionals realized that "free play" must also be planned, and requested further training in this area. Attendence has been excellent and the centres fill many hours for the 3-8 year olds who previously had no afternoon activities.

Activities for children with parents were the topic of several meetings at the moshavim. Questions that were raised:

1. What happens to children whose parents are at work?
2. What do we do with the toddlers who arrive together with the parents?
3. Why can't an older sibling act as a parent substitute?

We tried to develop rules which would on the one hand not embitter the parents but on the other hand not sacrifice the principle of 2 hours per week together with the pre-schoolers.

Each centre had its own official opening. These were planned by the staff, moshav council and women jointly. Each opening had its own character and reflected the interests of past experiences of that moshav. Planning the opening was an important first step in developing the sense of "ownership" of the centre.

The following is Hasia Levin's progress report on the first year's activities of the moshav satellite project.

The Community

The first year has shown us that the centre's activities are directly related to the life cycle of the moshav. If for example, the moshav has an economic crisis or conflict, attendence drops. During rainy winter months, the men also requested activities. Community jealousies and fighting interfered with the social cohesiveness of the centres. The moshavim have a long history of such conflicts which impede all organized programmes including the functioning of structures such as day-care centres, etc.

Therefore the project staff initiated meetings with the Regional Council in order to organize an umbrella group of all the professional staff serving each moshav. The aim of this group is to work together with the local moshav members in order to help the community take more responsibility for its educational, social and cultural affairs. We hope that by working together the moshav members will be able to develop their activities in a more constructive atmosphere. Such a group has begun to meet in K'lachim and Sde Zvi.

Leadership

One of the most important achievements has been the development of local leadership of women in the moshav. Through training, the moshav counsellors have come to see themselves, and are seen by others, as women who are responsible and concerned with the activities of both their own moshav and of that in which they work.

The highlight of the year was the women's summer camp programme. At the initiative of the women a meeting was held with representatives of each moshav and all the counsellors to organize a two week day camp in July. Both the structure and the content were decided on by these representatives. The financial responsibility was shared by the women and the Regional Council. The project used its regular staff and budget without any large additional expenditure. The fifty women who registered enjoyed a programme of quality and content.

Centre Programme for Women

Through the year each centre was open twice a week for activities according to request. These ranged from sewing, home economics and toymaking to discussions on child rearing and problems of the moshav. Because the attendance remained small in the mornings (4-10) the staff carefully researched the problem. The following reasons and solutions are suggested:

1. The moshav community is small and isolated, therefore it is difficult to maintain a social atmosphere among the women. The same small circle of women tire of one another no matter what the activity.

2. The amount of money invested per moshav is high considering the target population. Therefore it was proposed that each of the 3 moshavim "adopt" a neighbouring moshav whose women will be invited to join centre activities.

3. Both in Pa'ameh Tashaz and K'lachim, women over age 40 did not attend the centre. A close investigation revealed that this age group does not feel comfortable with the younger women and requested a day of their own. Therefore an additional activity day has been proposed for the over 40's.

The number of women working outside the moshav is increasing yearly. There have been many requests for a weekly evening programme. However, experience has shown that not enough women from each moshav attend. Therefore a suggestion has been made that we register women from all 7 moshavim who will meet weekly in one centre for a choice of activities.

Activities for children

At the end of the first year the following activities were taking place:

Pa'ameh Tashaz: One afternoon a week for children ages 3-5;
once a week for grades 1 and 2;
once a week for parents and children together.

S'deh Zvi: Twice a week for children ages 3-8,
once a week for parents and children together.

K'lachim: Once a week for ages 3-5;
once a week for grades 1 and 2.

Attendance varied from 60% to 90% of all the children of each age group in the moshav. The year closed with a day camp programme during the month of August, when schools and kindergartens are closed. The counsellors worked together to organize varied activities both on individual moshavim and at the Regional Educational Centre for all the group.

Bothe the educational staff of the Regional Council and the parents had high praise for the young childrens' activities throughout the year.

In order to ensure continued development of this programme, the Regional Council has agreed to employ one of our counsellors, who has formal pre-school training, to act as co-ordinator. This is seen by the project staff as a guarantee for development in the future. Other moshavim have requested aid in organizing similar programmes for their young children.

Parent Guidance Corners

The Parent Guidance Corner in the "Well Baby" clinic in the Merchavim area was very successful and filled a need in that area. Parents have been most responsive and a plan has been developed, at the request of the mothers, to open toy making groups in that area's moshavim. The corner did not function during July-August, due to lack of transportation. (During the school year, the school buses provide regular transport).

The child development corner in the Mabuim Regional Centre was closed down due to the small number of babies and mothers who came to the "Well Baby" clinic. A programme is being worked out whereby the counsellor will make home visits to new born infants and their mothers.

The development of social cohesion and mutual aid

S'deh Zvi: S'deh Zvi in particular has developed in these areas through the centre. As a result the social worker planned to develop a community oriented programm in which she will use the centre as a base from which to strengthen her work in the moshav.

Pa'ameh Tashaz and K'lachim: They have both shown potential for self organization. The young women's desire of self development has been a driving force behind all the activities.

Throughout the year, the project steering committee, composed of representatives of the various social services, representatives of the Regional Council, the community workers serving the moshavim in which the project functioned, Hasia Levin, the satellite project coordinator, and Ruth Paz, the project director met at regular intervals.

Shlomo Hadad, the director of the Merchavim Department of Social Welfare and Education, was at all times helpful and cooperative. In short, we came up against none of the problems of obstructionism which so often hampered our efforts in Ofakim. Hasia Levin met regularly with the Moshav Local Council members and with the Culture and Education committees (in those moshavim where these functioned) and succeeded in gaining their respect and active cooperation. Similarly, she maintained excellent relationships with the various professionals connected to the moshavim.

At both the professional and the para-professional levels, the mother project in Ofakim and the satellite project in the moshavim were closely linked, sharing both resources and experience.

2. Dissemination to other projects and organizations

As in the past, we continued to share our experience, programmes and materials with others interested in developing similar activities or working in the same field, both in Israel and abroad.

In November 1981, we hosted a two day visit of students from Africa and Asia studying at the Mt. Carmel International Training Centre for Community Service. In February, Mrs. Mwakaretti and Mrs. Wamwango from the Kenya Institute of Education spent some days with us, as well as visiting other projects and educational institutions in Israel. Throughout the year, we maintained close relations with the Sederot-based van Leer project, to whom we were able to be of help in planning and developing the early childhood education components of their programme.

In May 1982, we were requested by the Association for the Advancement of Health and Social Welfare in the Negev to prepare a plan for the dissemination of the clinic-based parent guidance and play corner programme.

In April 1982, the Steering Committee of Project Renewal in Ofakim approved various programmes proposed by us, allocating 1.200.000 shekel for their implementation in the 1982 - 1983 fiscal year. (Unfortunately, the resignation almost immediately afterwards, of the local Project Renewal Director who was not replaced until the fall of 1982, resulted in the freezing of all new programmes and only those programmes already functioning continued to enjoy Project Renewal financing).

At the national and regional level, Project Renewal people have expressed interest in the programmes developed in Ofakim, and we hope that on-going contact will lead to further dissemination of the models developed in Ofakim and in our satellite moshav project.

IV Implementation of Aims and Objectives

We defined our aims and objectives for Phase II project operations along three dimensions:

1. functional-operational;
2. structural-organizational;
3. conceptual-content.

In conclusion of this review of project activities during 1980-1982 we will attempt to assess the degree to which we attained the objectives outlined in earlier sections of this report.

1. The functional-operational dimension

a. Consolidation and expansion of viable and relevant programmes: In general we can say that neighbourhood-based programmes, especially insofar as they are aimed at the less mobile sector of the population, (mothers and small children) have proved themselves to be most relevant to the needs of the population and hence most viable. These programmes have come not only to be accepted as an integral part of community life in the neighbourhoods where they are functioning, but are today considered as models whose efficacy has been demonstrated, with the result that there has been a readiness in the community to allocate resources for their expansion to additional neighbourhoods.

The EMRA home intervention programme and the new neighbourhood centre in the REMET neighbourhood were among the first projects approved within the framework of Project Renewal, and a proposal for the establishment of additional neighbourhood centres was submitted to the Steering Committee of Project Renewal and approved in principle. The fact that these programmes are co-sponsored by the Department of Social Welfare brings a welcome element of legitimization and institutionalization lacking in the past to our programmes. The same is true of the play and guidance corners in the clinics and of the Early Childhood Resource Centre: in the first instance, the Association for the Advancement of Health and Welfare Services in the Negev(a joint Ministry of Health-Kupat Cholim Health Fund and Beer-Sheva Medical School venture) has approved the programme and is participating in its funding, as well as expressing interest in further dissemination of the model; as regards the latter, the Ministry of Education has extended not only its blessing but its active cooperation.

b. New initiatives: The Work-plan for Phase II proposed two new initiatives, both geared to meet the needs of special problem groups in the community: teen-age girls (especially school drop-outs) and children from high-risk families at the beginning of their school career. With the opening of the REMET neighbourhood centre in October 1981, work with the former group was made possible. The tutorial programme, which was designed to meet the needs of the second group, though promising, had to be discontinued for reasons beyond our control.

2. The structural-organizational dimension

a. Assumption of responsibility for project operations by community members: This was considered an essential expression of enhanced community autonomy. We feel that we have been singularly successful at two levels in attaining our objective: that of the representatives of community institutions active in the Association for Education and Community, who have been devoted advocates of the project and have become involved in all aspects of project administration, and that of the indigenous project staff, who have increasingly assumed responsibility not only for implementing, but also for planning project operations.

At the third level, that of the client population, our success has been less auspicious, and this remains perhaps the central challenge to be met if the project is to attain its overall goal of autonomous community functioning. The question of the degree to which a project involved only with certain segments of the community and having only partial impact on the total life-situation of its client population can effect radical changes in perceptions and ingrained behavioural patterns is one on which we often ponder, with varying degrees of optimism or pessimism. It is perhaps as yet too early to draw any but tentative conclusions, but it may be that the broadly-stated goal of autonomous community functioning is one which can be attained only within the context of more comprehensive social change, and that the best we can hope for is an increased awareness of its desirability and some positive steps towards its achievement.

b. Institutionalization: This point has already been discussed. In summation, we can say that the project's programmes have been well-integrated into the fabric of community life in Ofakim and thus stand a good chance of continuing after the project's termination, provided that the circumstances which so far have protected educational and social betterment programmes in development areas from budget-slashing continue to prevail and local politics do not militate against us. Similarly, we hope that the fact that statutory agencies are contributing to the support of the various project activities will enhance their ultimate viability. Given a situation where 95% of the municipal budget comes not from local rates but from allocations from central governmental agencies, this support is vital.

c. Cost-effectiveness: Our main achievement in this area has been in increasing the efficiency of project operations: increased case-loads in the EMRA programme, reduction of the ratio between professional and para-professional staff, and almost total elimination of outside assistance in the form of lectureres, etc. Participants in activity and discussion groups in the centres and in the EMRA programme pay a fee, and all materials used in workshops are paid for at cost price.

Although we undoubtedly have not exhausted all possibilities, we face the dilemma of how to make programmes more cost effective without impairing their quality.

d. Coordination and cooperation with other organizations: Considerable progress had been made in the direction of coordinating activities with other community-focused organizations, especially health and social services. In the work plan for Phase II we envisioned the next step as active cooperation in planning and implementing joint programmes in order to extend the community involvement concept to other areas of community life. The Early Childhood Resource Centre is a primary example of successful cooperation of this sort, not only as regards the in-service training programme and other centre-based activities but also as far as strengthening pre-school-home links is concerned. Similarly, the Department of Social Welfare has worked together with us in preparing the project proposals presented already financed by Project Renewal for which we are jointly responsible.

e. Linkage between programmes: We have from the beginning emphasized the inter-connection between the various programmes and the development of a community-education network. The increased professionalism of the project's indigenous staff as well as their enhanced understanding and internalization of the project's basic aims have contributed significantly towards the effective integration of project activities. Most recently, coordinated planning at the neighbourhood level, in which staff members from the different programmes participate,has proven to be very effective, as have periodic meetings of all the staff devoted to overall planning and evaluation.

3. The Conceptual - Content Dimension

The major development in this area has been the formulation of structured programme contents in which the basic concepts and philosophy of the project find expression.

On the whole we have found that the more clearly underlying educational objectives are defined and operationalized, the more possible is it to meet the demand for flexibility and adaptability to the specific needs and interests of the particular groups or individuals involved in project activities. The contribution of our indigenous staff in the development of a curriculum suited both in form and content to the culture no less than to the educational needs of our target population has been invaluable.

In summation we feel that we have in most instances succeeded in achieving the objectives we set ourselves. Our outstanding achievement is undoubtedly the evolvement of a local project team of unusual ability and dedication. On the other hand, we have been less than successful in getting the client population at the neighbourhood level to assume responsibility and to play a more active role in planning and implementation of activities. The intensive effort devoted during these years to clarification of objectives and to on-going evaluation of the degree to which they are being achieved has more than justified itself.

APPENDIX: LIST OF PROGRESS REPORTS AND WORK-PLANS

1. Project Proposal and Work-Plan for Year * pp
2. Preliminary Report on Ofakim - November 1977 pp
3. Progress Report No. 1. - October 1977 - March 1978 31 pp
4. Progress Report No. 2. - Summary of Project Activities - Year I - October 1977 - August 1978 26 pp
5. Work-Plan and Objectives for the Second Year of Project Operations - September 1978 - August 1979 47 pp
6. Progress Report No. 3. - September 1978 - February 1979 17 pp
7. Progress Report No. 4. - Summary of Project Activities Year II - September 1978 - August 1979 66 pp
8. Work-Plan and Objectives for the Third Year of Project Operations - September 1979 - August 1980 46 pp
9. Summary Report Stage I: September 1977 - August 1980 163 pp